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THE

CONFESSIONS

OF AN

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN.

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Drawn by E.V. Harris. Engraved by S. Hollis.

Louisa.

OR MY FIRST LOVE.

London, Published 1836, for the Proprietor, by Longman & Co Paternoster Row.

THE

CONFESSIONS

OF AN

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN.

ILLUSTRATED BY SIX FEMALE PORTRAITS, FROM HIGHLY FINISHED DRAWINGS BY E. T. PARRIS.

BY

THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMAN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

MDCCCXXXVI.

WILLIAM WILCOCKSON, ROLLS BUILDINGS, FETTER LANE.

THE CONFESSIONS

OF AN

ELDERLY GENTLEMAN.

"Who cares, or thinks, about Elderly Gentlemen," methinks I hear a young lady exclaim, as throwing down this book with a disdainful air, she demands of the shopman at the library, "If there is not something new?"

You mistake, fair lady, many are they who think of little else than of Elderly Gentlemen; but, alas! these are young *wives* impatient to enact the part of young *widows;* heirs in a hurry to come into possession; holders of post obits; expectant legatees; and *faithful* servants anxious to render the last duties to their dear masters, and to receive the meed of their *disinterested* services.

This is an autobiographical-loving age: why, then, should *I* not amuse myself, if not my readers, by revealing the experience I have acquired, if it were only for the purpose of establishing two facts, which many young men seem to doubt; namely, that *vanity* is not solely confined to *women;* and that all old gentlemen, however improbable it may appear, were once young. Perhaps, I have also another, and less disinterested object in view—the discomfiture of time, that ruthless enemy, which has lately begun to press heavily on me. I endeavoured to kill *it* in my youth, but now it has laid me by the heels; for, in sober sadness, I am a victim to gout, unable to move from my easy chair, and, consequently, more than ever sensible of the power of my antagonist. *A propos* of gout: I wish the erudite 'Doctor,' who has helped me to beguile many a tedious hour, by his recondite and 'right merie' lucubrations, would favour the world, in his next volume, with an etymological chapter on that malady; proving, for instance,

as he might easily do, that it derives its cognomen from the French word *goût*, which we translate by taste; for who, *without* taste, ever had the gout? and how few *with*, have ever escaped it!

* * * *

I have been many years absent from England, wandering in search of that yet undiscovered good, "a fine climate;" which, like happiness, for ever eludes the pursuer, though constantly holding out delusive prospects of its attainment. The searchers of *one*, like those of the other, are, in general, confined to the class who, possessed of more wealth than wisdom, make unto themselves an imaginary good; and then set out in a weary chase of it.

Blasé with that most fatiguing of all lives, a life of pleasure, and suffering under its never-failing consequences, a mind teeming with *ennui*, and a frame weakened by luxurious indulgence, I determined to visit the Continent; and traversed France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain, in the vain belief, that a 'mind diseased,' and

worn-out constitution, were to be renovated by the magical air of the south. What its effect might have been, I have yet to learn; for, I have been nearly frozen by the *bise* in the south of France; enervated almost to annihilation by the sirocco in Italy; reduced nearly to a state of fusion in Sicily; and scorched into a cinder in Spain and Portugal, without having yet discovered the object of my search, a fine climate.

I returned to England after many long and weary years of absence, rather worse in health than when I left it; as the incursions made on my already debilitated constitution, by undue heat, unlooked for winds, and unwholesome diet, instead of retarding, tended to advance, the effects of that cruel enemy, Time. Wine too sour to admit of its copious use, food too insipid to induce even a gourmand, much less an epicure, to commit an excess, enforce the adoption of *temperance* on those who are the most opposed to it; and *this virtue*, so seldom practised at home, is the whole, the sole, advantage to be derived

from a continental residence. Tired of feeding on flour tortured into all the varied forms ycleped macaroni, vermicelli, lasague, tortellini, parpadella, patta di puglia, ravioli, and half a hundred other insipid dishes; and of devouring beccaficos, thrushes, and blackbirds, washed down by ungenerous liquids, misnamed wines, I left the Continent; my stomach weakened by unsubstantial sustenance, and my skin seamed by the repeated and vigorous attacks of those murderers of sleep, mosquitos and sand-flies, that so often destroyed mine, in spite of all the futile aids of Russia leather pillows, and gauze curtains, entitled mosquito nets; which last, more frequently serve to imprison your tormentor with you, than to exclude him.

Returned, thank Heaven! to my native land. I resigned myself a willing victim to all the luxuries it can boast. I offered up whole hecatombs of turtle and venison to appease the wrath of my long restricted and much injured appetite: and felt most sensibly that patriotic sentiment so

much lauded by poets and orators, denominated *love of country;* which is only another term for the love of its table and fireside. With what a gusto, as the Italians say, did I indulge in old sherry, madeira that had twice crossed the line, and claret such as one never finds out of Great Britain! the thin and acid beverage of the Continent known by the name of Bordeaux, bearing as little affinity to that excellent wine, as lachryma christi does to champagne. With how much more pleasure did I contemplate an orchard in Herefordshire, and the hop-grounds in Kent, than I had ever experienced in viewing the orange groves and vineyards of southern climes; and a coal fire was hailed as an old familiar friend is welcomed after a long absence. So much was my *amor patriæ* increased by a return to its comforts, that not even the opaque fog which presented itself, like a dense curtain of pea soup, to my startled sight, one morning in the November after my return, could disgust or alarm me. I ordered lights, shut out the day,

and commanded an extra luxurious dinner. In a few months I was hardly to be recognised, so great was the change produced in my outward man. My white face had become of a rich rubicund hue, making the "erst pale, one red;" my lank person, which, on ariving from the Continent, resembled the portraits of "the lean and slippered pantaloon," assumed a portly protuberance; and my feet, those barometers of health, gave indications that good living had produced its certain effect, a severe fit of gout, which soon confined me to the sofa, a resting-place whereunto I am now generally condemned more than half the year.

Change of air having been prescribed for me, I lately proceeded to this country seat of mine, which I have not visited for twenty-five years: and, *pour passer le temps*, as the French say, I have had the drawers of my old escritoire brought to my easy chair, and have sought amusement in examining their contents. What piles of letters, in delicate hand writing, tied up with ribands

of as delicate die, met my pensive gaze; gentle ghosts of departed pleasures and forgotten pains! What miniatures of languishing blue-eyed blondes, and sparkling piquantes brunettes! What long ringlets of hair of every colour, from the lightest shade of auburne (maliciously called red) to the darkest hue of the raven's wing! What rings, pins, and lockets, were scattered around, with mottoes of eternal love and everlasting fidelity! which eternal love and everlasting fidelity had rarely withstood the ordeal of six months' intimacy. What countless pairs of small white gloves! What heaps of purses, the works of delicate fingers! What piles of fans, the half-authorised thefts of ball-rooms, thefts so gently rebuked and so languidly reclaimed! What knots of riband grasped in the mazy dance! What girdles, yielded with blushing, coy delay! with bouquets of faded flowers enough to stock the *hortus siccus* of half the botanists in England! and a profusion of seals, with devices each more tender than the other!

The past, with all its long forgotten pleasures and pains, rose up to my imagination; recalled into life by these *gages d'amour*, which had survived the passions they were meant to foster: but which now so far fulfilled their original destination, as to make their donors suddenly and vividly present to my memory, as though they had been summoned into a brief existence by the magical wand of a necromancer. The loved —the changed—the dead—stood before me in their pristine charms: and I felt towards each, and all, some portion of long vanished tenderness revive in my breast.—Beautiful sex! soothers in our affliction, and best enliveners in our hours of happiness, all that I have known of joy on earth, I owe to your smiles, to your partiality!

This miniature represents my first love, not the object of my crude, puerile fancy; for what stripling has ever passed from fifteen to twenty, without having fancied himself, at least half a dozen times, smitten with the tender passion?

what youth has ever been philosopher enough to have resisted the charms of an attractive nursery governess; or the younger sister, or daughter, of the preceptor, under whose roof he studied lessons of love and erudition at the same time?

No—this picture has nothing to do with such *minor* phantasies. It represents her who engendered in me the first rational sentiment of attachment I ever experienced, the first woman that led me to anticipate with pleasurable feelings the holy state of wedlock, as a *near*, and not as a *perspective* good, as a happiness to be attained as speedily as possible, and not as a change of life to be endured, as best it might be, at some remote period. How vast is the difference, by the way, between a passion and a sentiment! The first may be excited for an unworthy object, and in an unworthy mind; by a silly girl for a sillier boy; but the second, can only be inspired by a pure woman, and entertained by an honorable man. One of the many distinc-

tions, between the two sexes, is, that women feel love as a sentiment: while with men, it is a passion: hence, it takes deeper root, and is of longer duration, with them, than with us. But, in proportion to our intellectual cultivation, this peculiarity becomes less frequent; for imagination and refinement once enlisted beneath the banners of love, *that* becomes sentiment, which, otherwise, would have been solely passion.

But, to return from this digression (and I warn my readers, if I should be so fortunate as to find any, that I am given to digress), I now begin the narrative of my first love, verifying the words of the old French song—

> "On en revient toujours,
> A ses premiers amours."

Louisa Sydney, the original of the miniature now before me, was one of the fairest specimens of her sex, that nature ever formed. There are the eyes, blue as heaven's own cerulean hue, and the cheek with its delicate tint, resembling the leaf of a newly blown rose. There are the long

and silken tresses of lightest brown, that wantoned over her finely rounded shoulders, descending to a waist, whose exquisite symmetry was unequalled. Well do I remember, when one of those silken glossy ringlets was severed from her beautiful head, to fill the locket now before me! Poor, dear Louisa! how she loved me! There is something soothing and delightful in the recollection of a pure minded woman's affection; it is the oasis in the desert of a worldly man's life, to which his feelings turn for refreshment, when wearied with the unhallowed passions of this work-o'day world. I would not voluntarily relinquish the memory of Louisa's love for all—all—what shall I say!—Alas! *my* all of enjoyment is now so limited, that I have little to resign; but that, and much, much more, would I surrender, sooner than part from the conviction that she loved me.

Louisa Sydney was not only beautiful, but she was mild and gentle, beyond description; yet her gentleness, and amazing docility, had

nothing of insipidity in them, for they originated in a perfect freedom from selfishness, that led her to yield her own wishes to those of the person she loved, a concession, not of *reason* but of *volition*. She absolutely lived for those dear to her; and had more pleasure in obeying their desires, than in gratifying her own.

There was a sweet pensiveness in her nature, that harmonized perfectly with the peculiar character of her beauty.—Hers was not a mind prone to gloom, but of that subdued and tender order, which, like a summer twilight, in itself beautiful, disposes all to feel its mild and soothing influence. One could not have told *her*, with the slightest prospect of success, a ludicrous story, a whimsical quibble, or any one of the various bad jokes, with which the conversation of the generality of persons is assisted in society. But, she was one, to whom the fairest flowers, the most imaginative poem, or the most elevated work on practical holiness, would be felt to be an appropriate offering. Strongly

tinctured with romance, the romance of youthful refinement, which is a natural attribute of the best and purest of her sex, ere experience has driven the illusions of early youth away, Louisa shrank from the busy world, affrighted and stunned with its turmoil; and opened her innocent heart to the contemplation of the charms of nature, and the adoration of the God who created them.

What pictures we drew of the future!—love, not in a cottage, because she knew my lot had rendered my home a stately one, but *she* would have preferred a more humble abode.

"A cottage," has she often said, "overgrown with woodbine, jessamine, and roses, sheltered by a wood, with a clear stream gliding in front of a garden, redolent with flowers; *this*, dearest Harry, would be my choice."

"And our food, dearest," would I reply, in bantering mood, "should be milk, honey, and curds, with new-laid eggs, and simple fruits."

"Well, such food would amply content *me*,"

would Louisa say, "but you men are always thinking of a good dinner. Yet, would you all be better and happier, because more healthy, if your diet was more simple; but you 'yearn for the flesh pots,' the green fat of turtle, or the white muscle of venison, the racy juice of Spain's vines, and the iced vintage of France. Ah, Harry, Harry—

> 'These little things, disguise it how you can,
> These little things are dear to little man!'"

Ye gods, what a twinge that was! it seemed as if a red-hot knitting needle was shot through my foot; and the exclamation it occasioned brought my blockhead of a servant in, with—"If you please, sir, did you call?"—Did I call? if I had, he would not have been so prompt in his attendance; for, during the last twenty years, I have remarked, that servants rarely come, when one *does* require them, and always when one does *not*. Oh! this plaguy gout! how dependent it makes a man feel! for not only does it "fill all his bones with aches, make

him roar," but it impresses him with the agreeable conviction, that if a spark from the fire should by chance be attracted towards his garments, he might be consumed at leisure, unless some servant should arrive to his rescue. Ah! why did I *not* marry? why not have secured to myself a legitimate, a licensed nurse, whose duty, if not pleasure, it would have been, to have watched the paroxysms of this fearful malady, and to have noted the want of philosophy with which they were endured? People are always so philosophically stoical to the sufferings of their *near* and *dear* relatives, and so ready to accuse them of not bearing the ills to which flesh is heir with becoming equanimity.—Another twinge!—Oh! ye gods, what martyrdom!

Psha, psha, at this rate my confession will never be made. "*Tant mieux*," says my tired, if not tiresome reader. Let me see, where was I? Poor, dear Louisa! we thought not of gout in her day; no, no, nor of the necessity of *easy* chairs, in which persons are most

uneasily placed; nor of sofas, reclined on which, a wretch suffers more than on the bed of Procrustes. In her day, I only remembered that I had feet for dancing.—*Now*, Lord help me, when I look on my swollen and bandaged foot, which resembles a bloated Esquimaux child, I can hardly believe that I ever could have sported "on the light fantastic toe," or "brushed the dew-drops from the grass, at early morn." In Louisa's time, I as *little* contemplated my present state of purgatory, as I then, abandoned myself to the indulgence which has entailed on me these sufferings. The indulgencies of the *heart*, then occupied me more than those of the stomach: would that the former had always constituted my enjoyment!

But to resume.—Let me open this pacquet of letters, written with a crow quill. How delicate is the writing, and the riband that holds them together, *couleur de rose*, like the cheek of the fair writer when they were penned—that cheek —what is it now? Poor, dear Louisa!

Here is the first letter she ever wrote me, for I see I numbered them.

"I fear you will think me too lightly won, and blame my imprudence in answering the note you placed in my hand on leaving the ball. That note has told me all that I longed to know, which I hoped, yet doubted. And yet a feeling of remorse poisoned my enjoyment while reading it; for, conscience whispered that I ought not to have received it, and that in perusing it I violated the duty I owe dear mamma. Every word of kindness from her (and never does she speak to me save in kindness) seems to reproach me for this duplicity. Do let me tell her; or, better still, confess to her yourself, that you love me; for there is something that looks like guilt in mystery, which renders it abhorent to me."

Poor dear Louisa!

Here is No. 2.

"What a delightful picture you have drawn of our future lives! But can you, dearest Harry, give up the gay and brilliant world, which you

have enjoyed with such a zest, to retire to some sequestered home with me? I rejoice that you like green fields, trees, flowers, and birds, almost as much as I do." (Poor dear soul! I had persuaded her, and myself too, that I was a perfect Corydon). "From my infancy I had felt delight in them, and this sympathy in our tastes is a new link in the chain of affection that binds us. I thought, but perhaps it was only fancy, that you looked pale last night, and this thought haunted my pillow." Poor Louisa, if she saw me now, with this rubicund face! "I hope you are not ill, dear Henry; or if ill, that you will not make light of your indisposition. *Now* that you know the happiness of another depends on you, you must be careful of your health. It is by suggesting to me a similar reflection, that dear good mamma makes me submit to a thousand disagreeable remedies for colds caught, and antidotes against catching them.

"Is it not even more culpable of me to write to you clandestinely, than to receive your letters?"

(I had postponed declaring in form to her mother, purposely that I might enjoy the selfish gratification of triumphing over Louisa's repugnance to the maintenance of our secret correspondence). "Indeed, Harry, I must write to you no more until mamma knows all; for, she is too confiding and indulgent to be deceived by her child, on whom she has lavished such unremitting care and affection. I know not how I shall acquire courage to place this note in your hand; there is something so unfeminine, so indelicate, in acting thus, and in the presence, too, of the dear parent I am deceiving, that I blush for myself. Do not, dearest Harry, think ill of me, that my attachment to you has conquered the maidenly reserve of your

"LOUISA."

Dear, gentle soul! I think I see her now, with that deep, earnest look of tenderness with which I so often caught her beautiful eyes fixed on my face!——Why, hang me, if I am not

playing the woman, and weeping for a poor, dear girl that has been in her grave these forty years! Well, I did not think I had so much softness left in my rugged nature; but if ever a girl merited to be loved and lamented, it was Louisa Sydney.

I complied with her desire, and told her mother of our attachment a week sooner than I had intended. The good lady seemed nearly as much hurt as surprised, that her daughter should have avowed a preference for any man without having first consulted her; but, a tear and a kiss from Louisa, and a few civil speeches from me, made our peace, and all was soon *couleur de rose* again.

"Mr. Lyster," said Lady Sydney, "in confiding my child to you, I give you that which is dearer to me than life itself. Louisa's feelings are as *delicate* as is, alas! her frame; neither are formed to resist even the breath of unkindness. Watch over her happiness, be careful of exposing her fragile health to any sudden changes of temperature, and forget not that you have a

precious, but tender plant: she requires a never-ceasing care, but will amply reward you for it, if it please the Almighty to spare her to you."

There was a solemnity in the fond mother's appeal that threw a damp over my joy; but, when I saw the bright rose blooming on the cheek of my betrothed, and marked the lustre of her beautiful eyes, I attributed Lady Sydney's warning to the anxiety of maternal affection, and almost smiled at her thinking Louisa a sickly plant. The natural docility of this lovely girl, operated upon by her strong affection for my unworthy self, gave me a most despotic empire over her; and I had the weakness of being proud of displaying it even to her mother. How often have I seen the cheek flush, and a tear start into the eye of Lady Sydney, when, to gratify some caprice of mine, her too gentle daughter has neglected some wise precaution relative to her health, which I deemed superfluous, though it was urged with anxiety by the alarmed parent.

Louisa has reproached me for this conduct,

saying, "How can you, Harry, make me act, even in trifles, contrary to mamma's advice. I cannot bear to see her look distressed or apprehensive; though I believe there is no cause, for I feel well, quite well, and so happy!"

How her soft lustrous eyes beamed on me with increased tenderness, as she referred to her happiness, implying that I was its source.

"It is my dear mother's excessive love for me that makes her see danger where none exists; yet it is cruel, it is ungrateful of me, not to avoid exciting her apprehensions. I imagine myself in her place—and well can I fancy how I should feel at seeing a stranger come and usurp the authority, the love, all that had previously been exclusively mine. To resign this empire over the heart and conduct of an only child, must be a bitter feeling, until time has softened it. Why, then, take this ungenerous pleasure, dear Harry, in putting your wishes in competition with hers; knowing, as you too well do, that I cannot resist following *yours*, though I

am not ungrateful enough not to suffer a painful sense of remorse while disobeying hers."

When Louisa has thus spoken to me, I have tried to laugh her out of her scruples, calling her mother's precautions absurd, and her remedies the quackeries of an old woman. Many were the stupid pleasantries, and bad jokes, which I lavished on the subject; and derived an idle and a guilty gratification from continually proposing plans of amusement, in *opposition* to the watchful care of Lady Sydney. It appeared to me that Louisa's affection for me was most strongly displayed, when it led her to thwart the counsel of one, whose slightest wish she had hitherto joyfully obeyed; consequently my vanity and selfishness (and I had, Heaven knows, an undue portion of both), led me to indulge in this puerile, this unworthy gratification, even at the expense of the feelings of the creature dearest to me on earth.

Lady Sydney, however, bore all my guilty perversity with exemplary patience. It was

plain, that seeing the extent of her daughter's attachment to me, she stifled her own sentiments, rather than risk becoming a subject of contention between us; and frequently yielded her better, wiser judgment, in preference to wounding Louisa's feelings, by disputing mine.

Yet, notwithstanding little altercations, or rather a forced submission to my will, how happy was the period that followed the acceptance of my proffered hand! Though we met every day, and passed nearly the whole of it together, still I insisted on Louisa's writing to me; and now, that our engagement was ratified by her mother, she poured forth, with the artless warmth of youthful innocence, the expression of her sentiments. Ay, those *were* happy days, yet I thought not so then, for I was anticipating the still happier period when I should call this angelic creature mine.—How often have I since reproached myself for not having sufficiently prized them! How often have I recalled each word and look of her, whose every word and

look gave me rapture. But such is man, never content with the present, always looking to the future, that mysterious future, whose secrets, could he but divine them, would make the present appear blissful.

I had no father to consult, a large fortune at my own disposal, and, as parsimony was not then among my faults, I gave Lady Sydney *carte blanche* for the marriage settlements. Title deeds were placed in the hands of the lawyers, those gentlemen, so blamed by impatient lovers, and commended by prudent parents, whose disagreeable duty apparently consists, not only in seeing that *no* error be committed by contracting parties, but in discovering that some oversight has taken place in the lives of their defunct progenitors.

Jewels and carriages were ordered, our portraits were exchanged, by which I became possessed of the beautiful miniature now before me; all (except the long ringlet of fair hair, and her letters) that remains to remind me of as lovely

and pure a creature, as ever returned to that heaven from which, while on earth, she seemed an exile. The days of courtship are proverbial for their brevity and sweetness; mine passed with a velocity, that now appears like the quick fleeting visions of sleep, though I then often murmured at their slowness. "The *twelfth* of next month," have I often exclaimed, "oh! would to heaven it were arrived (it was the period fixed on for our marriage); how intolerably slow appears the progress of time!" When I thus vented my impatience, Louisa would rebuke me, and say it was wicked, it was ungrateful to Providence, as every hour seemed marked with happiness. Even now, I seem to see her angel face, and to hear the low sweet voice, whose tones were music to my ear, though forty long and dreary years have passed over my head since she was laid in the grave.

We had agreed one evening to go on the water the following day, and to dine at Richmond. Louisa looked forward with almost

childish pleasure to this excursion, as she longed to be in the country again, even for a few hours. I dispatched my groom with a letter to order dinner to be prepared for us, and we talked over our party with anticipations of delight.

The next morning, the weather was sultry and oppressive, quick shifting and opaque clouds threatened rain, and Lady Sydney proposed the postponement of our excursion to a more favourable day. I fancied I saw disappointment in Louisa's sweet face, and this—but why try to evade the avowal?—With the wilfulness that had so frequently led me to oppose the prudent precautions of Lady Sydney, I was now induced to overrule her objections, and to insist on our going. Louisa joined her entreaties, seeing the obstinacy with which I urged my wishes; and we embarked at Whitehall stairs, in high spirits, notwithstanding the alarmed glances with which, from time to time, Lady Sydney regarded the overcast sky.

We passed a delightful day, rambling in the

beautiful environs of Richmond: Louisa leaning on my arm, and her dove-like eyes seeking sympathy in mine, at every new feature of the enchanting landscape.

Who that has ever enjoyed the pure happiness of a walk, in a beautiful country, with the woman he loves, can forget it in after years? Every word she uttered, every change of her lovely face is remembered by me, more freshly, oh! how much more freshly, than any circumstance of my later life. How often have they been recalled, and dwelt on, as only the words and looks of her we have *first* loved ever are.

"When I feel as now, dear Harry," said Louisa, laying her small white hand on my arm, "the vast goodness of Providence in not leaving me a single wish unsatisfied, I have a sort of superstitious dread, a shrinking presentiment, that such happiness is too exquisite for this world, and that it cannot endure. My very soul seems to imbibe rapture from the glories of the sky and earth, and to expand in love to

the Creator, for endowing me with this ecstatic feeling for his works. My eyes are gladdened with the all-enchanting scene around us; and you, dearest, are near me to share this happiness! Oh! who can regard that blue sky, and the soft, yet vivid tints, of the many-coloured foliage, the verdant lawns, whence spring a thousand odorous flowers, and that limpid river, whose glassy water seems formed to mirror the lovely scenes on its margin, without feeling an adoration for the Power that created them? Yet, in the midst of the tender, overflowing sense of gratitude with which such objects inspire me, is mingled a sadness, as I reflect on the uncertainty of life; and that, at a few hours' notice, we may be summoned to quit this beauteous, joyous earth, the blue and smiling skies, and those dearer to us—oh! how much dearer! than earth or sky. Before I knew *you*, my Harry, I often contemplated death, and never with dread; but, *now*, I shrink from it with dismay; for to leave *you* would be worse than death."

I chided her for these gloomy forebodings, but she returned to them.

"I have frequently thought," continued she, "that we do not talk of death sufficiently often. What would be said of the unkind friend, who knowing that a long and inevitable journey must part him for years from some dear, dear object, should neglect to speak of it to her; or to leave her the memory that they had *together* made preparations for it. It is thus, Harry, that I would wish for us, to think of that *longer* journey, that bitter and fearful separation, death, that the survivor may have the consolation, and a blessed one it is, of knowing that the departed went not forth, without having often thought of, mourned, and prepared for, the inevitable parting. Yet, though I have dreaded death since I have known you, I still think, that blessed are they who die young, ere yet life has lost any of its charms, or that the eye has learned to look on nature without delight, or the heart

to kindle at its beauties without gratitude. I met these lines the other day—

> ‘ Who dies in youth 'scapes many wretched hours,
> And goes unschooled in truths long life must learn;
> Truths that once known, each fair illusion flies,
> Never again to cheat us into joy.
> The early dead know not that love can die,
> And yet the hearts, that cherished it, survive:
> They think not smiling friendship can deceive,
> Nor that the ties of blood by nature wrought,
> Are weak as cords made of the ocean's foam,
> Which e'en the first rude fitful blast can break;
> Or like snow wreaths that melt before the sun,
> Dissolving till no trace is left behind.
> No, to die early is to 'scape much pain,
> And pass away, with all youth's gifts still with us,
> Leaving a sweet though mournful memory
> Of our young lives, to be for ever kept
> In hearts, that loved us, while we tarried here.'

And, as I perused them, I felt that to die young, is better than to survive happiness."

There was something so sweet, though mournful, in the tones of her voice, that though I attempted to chide her for thus dwelling on so painful a subject, I could not banter her, as was

my wonted custom, whenever she was more than usually pensive. Lady Sydney interrupted us, by entreaties to return home; she saw storms and rain menacing in every cloud that floated over our heads, yet I lingered, in spite of her anxiety to embark, smiling at her fears. The unusual exercise had heated, as well as fatigued my gentle love, her mother, soon after we had entered the boat, remarked that she appeared flushed; a term I was inclined to cavil with, as I thought I had never seen Louisa look so lovely before, the heightened tint of her cheeks imparting an increased brilliancy to her eyes.

We had only proceeded half way to London, when the threatening clouds poured a deluge; and, in a few minutes, Louisa was drenched by its torrents. How did I now reproach myself for my obstinacy, in having forced her mother to consent to this party. The alarmed glances with which she examined her daughter's face, seemed prophetic of some impending evil. I caught the infectious fear, which not all the

smiles of the fair object of it could pacify; and, with a bitter feeling of self-reproach, I mentally promised that never again would I expose her to a similar danger, by my wilfulness.

All the remedies used by the doting mother to avert the consequences of this disastrous day, proved unavailing. The next found Louisa in a fever, and her mother almost distracted. I hardly dared to meet Lady Sydney, and yet I could not bear to absent myself from her house. I felt that to my perverseness all the misery now impending over this late happy home was to be attributed; and, as each day increased the danger, I prayed, with my very soul humbled to the dust, and in a bitterness of spirit rarely felt, and never to be described, that Louisa might be spared. Her reason never left her for a moment; and she soon became fully aware that her hours were numbered. She entreated to be allowed to see me: and I was summoned to her chamber.

I found her reclined on a sofa; the hectic

blush of fever on her cheek, and her beautiful eyes sparkling with an unearthly lustre. A tear dimmed their radiance as she gazed on me; and her lip trembled with emotion, as she placed her burning and already nearly transparent hand within mine. Seeing that I was almost overwhelmed by the agony of my feelings, she tried to regain composure, and whispered to me—

"Remember, dearest, that our separation is not to be eternal; for, though *I* cannot stay with you on earth, you will, through the Divine mercy, come to me, where no more partings are. —I die young, sin or sorrow have not blighted me; I die beloved too, and is not this to die happy? You will remember me, Harry, going down to the grave in my youth, leaving behind me no one to blame my life, and some dear, oh! how dear, objects to mourn its brevity. Comfort my poor mother when I am gone, and prove, dearest Harry, that you truly loved me, by so regulating your life on earth, that we may be united in heaven."

Exhausted by the exertion of speaking, she fainted. The physicians drove me from the chamber: and I never saw my angelic Louisa again, until Death had clasped her in his cold embrace.

On *the twelfth* of July, —93, she breathed her last, that day, which was to have seen our hands joined at the altar; that day, whose tardy approach I had so often impatiently longed for, and impiously blamed for its delay, saw her a corse. Oh! Louisa, sainted love of my youth, the unwonted tears that fill these aged eyes, prove that years, long years, have not banished your cherished image from my heart.

I have been recalled from the mournful past to the dreary present, by the indiscreet entrance of my stupid servant, who had to repeat his usual phrase of "Did you call, sir?" twice, before I was aware of his presence. The blockhead found me weeping passionately; and it was one of the exclamations wrung from me by grief, that he mistook for a *call*. His look of surprise and pity

angered me. "Go away, go away, and be —— to you!" was the uncourteous exclamation which drove him and his pity away; and left me looking very foolish, and feeling not a little ashamed at having been caught weeping like a blubbering schoolboy. Hang the fellow! what will he, what can he think, has occasioned my grief? He 'll be sure to imagine that my tears and exclamations were wrung from me by pain. This is too vexatious; I would not have even such a lout suppose that physical suffering could wring a tear from me. And yet, if he knew that his old gouty master has been weeping for a maiden who has been more than forty years in her grave, it would make the rascal laugh. Faith, there is something ludicrous in my weakness, I must confess; yet, such was the vividness with which memory brought back old thoughts and feelings, that I forget I am an old man.

Nevertheless, there is a pleasure, though it is a very melancholy one, in remembering the days of our youth, those days when we could feel—

mentally, I mean; for, most assuredly, senility is not devoid of its physical sensations, however its intelectual ones may be blunted. My regrets remind me of the old French woman, who said, "*Ah que je regrette ces bons vieux temps lorsque j'etois si malheureuse.*" Let me, then, prolong this luxury of wo, by recurring again to my poor lost Louisa. I could not bear that she should be consigned to "the narrow house" without my once more looking at that angel face. I watched an opportunity when her heart-broken mother had been removed, in a state of exhaustion, from the chamber of death, for I dared not meet her there. I entered it with a heart bowed down by sorrow, and trembling limbs that almost refused to bear their wretched master.

It was early morn, a soft balmy summer's morn, when all nature seemed to awaken with renovated charms, while she, the fairest of nature's works, was faded for ever. Though in London, the little garden into which the windows of the room opened, seemed as vernal and

retired as if it belonged to the country. This garden had been the favourite retreat of Louisa; it was filled with plants and rare flowers, the greater part of which had been raised by her own fair hands. They were now in all their bloom, and redolent with fragrance, the dew-drops sparkling on their leaves, while she—oh, God! how fearful was the contrast! I drew near the bier, and looked on that still lovely face. How cold, how marble like, was its repose; yet so exquisitely soft was the character of her beauty, that it more resembled sleep than death. While I gazed on that countenance which the cold, dark grave was so soon to hide from me for ever, the birds which she had been accustomed to feed came gaily chirping to the window; and even ventured to pass the sill, chirping still more loudly, as if to claim their wonted repast. The gaiety of their notes almost maddened me; and I rose, like a maniac, to chace them, and close the windows, which had been opened, when Lady Sydney had with-

drawn. Again I turned to gaze on that cold, pale face, which seemed to exert a magical power over my senses.

"No, she cannot be gone from me for ever," said I. "How could I bear existence without her? How think that hours, days, weeks, months, years, are to pass away, and I never more to see *her*, who was the light of my eyes, the joy of my heart! Oh! speak to me, angel of my life! give me some sign that *I* am not all, all forgotten!"

While I apostrophized the beautiful statue before me, whose Promethean spark was extinguished for ever, a musical clock on the chimney-piece commenced playing her favourite air, an air to which we had both often listened in happy hours. I almost expected it would awake her, so powerfully did its sound bring back the past; and for the moment drive away the fearful reality of the present. As I gazed on her face, a fly, a large blue fly, fixed on her pale lip, and this awoke me to the dreadful truth.

"What, is she already, even in my presence,

to become the prey of such as thou?" cried I, approaching to drive away the odious insect. But it retained its place until my hand came almost in contact with it; and only fled when that hand fell on the lip it would have saved from profanation. Its icy, rigid touch seemed to freeze my blood; and she I loved—yes, loved to adoration, became—oh, God! that I should have felt it—an object of fear.

I rushed from the room in a state of distraction: and a violent brain fever released me, for some weeks, from the consciousness of suffering.

I never again saw Lady Sydney, for she left England in a short time after her daughter's death: and died at Nice, within six months of the period that consigned Louisa to the grave. Before she quitted London she addressed to me a mournful, but a kind letter, in which she inclosed the following stanzas, which was found in the desk of my lost and sainted love, and were the last she ever wrote.

MY SECOND LOVE.

Well, I think I may venture to recount the story of my second love, without the fear of becoming lachrymose. No, no! Arabella Wilton, who was its object, never brought a serious thought into my head, unless it was on the folly of mankind in general, and mine in particular, for being so easily made the dupes of such women.

In justice to my fidelity and sensibility, I ought to state, that I sincerely mourned for my poor lost Louisa, during two long dreary years; and I was romantic enough to believe that I never could love again; a belief that most persons similarly situated are apt to indulge until experience proves its fallacy.

Here is the portrait of Arabella: the artist has caught the half-imperious, yet winning expression of her sparkling black eyes, which seemed to say, as plain as ever such orbs could speak, "Resist me if you can." What a profusion of raven tresses fall round that oval face! how rich is the sunny tint of her cheek, and the ripe crimson of her lips; lips that never opened except to smile or give utterance to some sprightly *badinage*, whose *malice*, as the French call it, was forgiven in consideration of the beautiful mouth that originated it. Arabella was the very opposite of the gentle Louisa; she commanded, rather than won, her admirers into love, and seemed so certain of their hearts, and gave so little security of yielding hers in exchange, that she kept them (and she had not a little battalion) in a perpetual state of *qui vive.*

The sentiment, if such it might be called, that Arabella inspired, was a much more common *one* than real affection. Her admirers commenced with love for *her*, but ended in love for *them-*

selves; as she was eminently skilled in wielding that powerful weapon, *l'amour propre*, and by its judicious treatment rarely failed to gain an empire over those she wished to influence. The equal encouragement she administered to all whom she desired to enchain, rendered the chace of her heart as exciting as—what shall I say—I have it—a fox chace; if so homely a simile may be allowed to be addressed to so dignified a theme; and like that exciting amusement, vanity creating the desire of surpassing all competitors, furnished the chief charm of the pursuit. Scarcely a day, nay, an hour, elapsed, that each candidate for her favour did not imagine himself the preferred; and did not inwardly smile at the vanity of his slighted rivals, while *she* was secretly laughing at them all, having predetermined to wed the richest, whoever he might be. If I called and found her with only her aunt, she never failed to amuse me with piquant anecdotes illustrative of the *betise* of Lord Henry, or pungent *satire* against Sir John; though her attention

to each of these worthies had excited my jealousy the day before. Nay, so adroitly did she point out all the ridiculous defects in their characters, manners, and appearance, that she not only quieted my jealous fears, but actually created in me a degree of commiseration for these unhappy wights: though, truth to say, I was never more amused, or more inclined to admire Arabella, than when she was using every weapon in the armoury of her wit, in attacking my rivals.

It never for one moment occurred to me, that her hypocrisy, in thus ridiculing those whom she openly encouraged, was reprehensible; or that, probably, she was equally severe in her animadversions on me during my absence. No: vanity, gratified vanity, prevented my discovery of aught, except that *she* was charming, and that *I* must be the preferred, or she would never have thus selected me as the confidant of her real opinion of her admirers. Nay, I am persuaded, that had my best friend informed me that Arabella made *me* the object of her ridicule, I should have

disbelieved the assertion; and attributed it to some little feeling of envy or jealousy on the part of the narrator. Such is the confidence vanity gives a man, *not* in the sincerity of his mistress, but in the irresistable power of his own attractions. Lord Henry and Sir John were, nevertheless, the only formidable rivals among the train of her danglers: not that they were superior in either mental or personal attractions to the rest, but simply because they were richer. Lord Henry had lately inherited a very large fortune from an old bachelor uncle, and was consequently considered an excellent *parti*; and Sir John was in possession of a clear twenty thousand a-year, a possession which in those days, no less than in *these*, rendered the possessor very popular with all ladies who had to give, or were to be given in marriage. Neither of these admirers had as yet asked for Arabella's hand, save for a *contre* dance; and she was skilfully playing them off against each other and me, in order to elicit a demand for her hand for life. Yet, this ma-

nœuvre, *I*, in my infinite wisdom, never once suspected; but, vain men (and I confess I was one) ever were, and will be fools to the end of the chapter.

At this epoch, Lord Henry was called away by the illness of his father, and Sir John had taken his departure to attend the Newmarket meeting. The field was consequently left open to me, and I determined on making the best use of my time to bring Arabella to a decision in my favour before the return of my rivals. How delightful, thought I, to witness their mortification and disappointment at my success; and with this laudable motive—and I verily believe it was the predominant, if not the sole one—I looked forward to proposing to enter a state in which the whole happiness or misery of life depends on the selection of the object with whom it is to be shared, and the respect as well as affection entertained for her. Yet, if all about to assume the holy tie of matrimony were to analyse their motives for seeking it, how few would find them

stand the test of reason; or how few dare to conjecture the probable duration of the sentiment—if sentiment such fancies may be denominated—that led to it.

But a truce to moralizing, and back to my story. On my next visit to Arabella, after the departure of Lord Henry and Sir John, she received me with even more than her usual kindness; congratulated me that I could exist without attending Newmarket, protesting that she held in horror the votaries of the turf, who, she said, seldom possessed as much intelligence as the quadrupeds on whom they betted thousands, and possessed infinitely less sagacity than the bipeds in the shape of grooms, who outwitted them. Severe animadversions on her absent admirers, and implied compliments on my superiority, encouraged me to make her the proposal of my hand. I said all that it is customary to say on such occasions, when a man is, or fancies that he is, enamoured; but, while uttering these platitudes, I could not help thinking how different

had been my sensations when making a similar declaration to my first love, my gentle, lost Louisa. Nor could I avoid observing, how differently the proposal was received. Here was no tremulous sensibility, no bashful timidity, no tears starting from the downcast lid, and, like a pearly dewdrop, stealing over a cheek of rose. No, her grandmother, had she been alive, could not have been more perfectly unembarassed; though, after the pause of a few moments, she affected (and even I, infatuated as I was, yet saw it was affectation) to look down, and murmur something about "the unexpectedness of my proposal."

"Then, am I to understand that it is disagreeable to you," said I, piqued by her want of feeling.

"Disagreeable?" repeated the Syren, "what a word!" and she placed her small white hand in mine, as she turned away her head, to conceal, *not* her blushes, but her *want* of them. I was fool enough to throw myself on my knees

before her; by Jove, at this moment, the very thought of such an attitude gives me a twinge in my foot. There again—what a horrible shooting pain—and that blockhead, John, has let the time elapse for bringing me my colchicum.—Here he comes at last—so, that will do, sirrah!

Well, let me remember, where was I when that twinge put it all out of my head—oh! I have it—I was on my knees, kissing the little hand she abandoned to me, and her head averted, probably to hide a smile of either triumph or ridicule, when a loud voice in the ante-room (loud voices in ante-rooms are often convenient) gave me notice that we were about to be interrupted. I had only time to start on my legs, and look nearly as unconcerned as—my lady love, ere her bustling aunt entered the apartment, to announce that a letter had just reached her, requiring their immediate presence at Clifton, where a near relative was dangerously ill. She had sent to order post-horses,

and desired her niece to commence preparations for her journey. While *Madame la tante* retired to the ante-room to give orders to her *femme de charge*, Arabella whispered me to write to her aunt, to make my proposal in form.

"Why not make it now, and in person," said I, "and declare our mutual affection and engagement?"

"Oh! no, on no account," replied the deceiver, "you know not how precise and prudish my aunt is," (and that I was utterly ignorant of these features of her character, was very true, for I had never seen even the most remote symptom of them in the old lady). "She would never forgive us," pursued Arabella, "if she knew that you had proposed to *me* before you had asked her permission; so pray don't commit me. Write *her* a formal proposal, and name the settlements you intend to make; for, though *I*, dear Henry, do not regard such matters, *she*, I blush to say, regards little else (avarice being the besetting sin of the old), and we must conciliate her."

There was something repugnant to my feelings in all this cold, calculating policy: and yet, fool as I was, I attributed the confidence reposed in me by the niece, relative to her aunt's mercenary disposition, to her affection for me. Thus, are we ever ready to be misled by our vanity!

I left the house with reluctance; and no sooner reached home than I obeyed Arabella's dictates, and wrote the formal proposal; in which, after expressing, with all the exaggeration of sentiment usual to the occasion, my attachment to her niece, I offered settlements so liberal, that not even the most mercenary aunt could have objected to them. I waited impatiently for an answer; for, though sure of Arabella's consent, I wished to have it confirmed by the sanction of one, who stood in the light of a parent and guardian to her. But *no* answer came; and, when I dispatched my servant a second time to demand one, he was informed that the ladies had left town.

Day after day elapsed without bringing me

the desired reply from the aunt, whose silence seemed most unaccountable. Various and painful were the reflections it occasioned me, the prominent one being regret for having made the offer; for I now began to feel that, when no longer present to dazzle me by her beauty, or to amuse me by her satirical sallies, Arabella's fascinations were forgotten, and little or no semblance of passion in my breast, reminded me that I had once fancied she was dear to me. I almost wished that the aunt would refuse her consent; though some little feeling of humiliation as to what Lord Henry would say, or Sir John think of me, as a rejected suitor, crossed my mind each time I indulged the vague hope.

At length, after many days of suspense, a letter was brought me from Mrs. Spencer, apologizing for not having sooner replied to me; but stating, that the imminent danger of her relative had driven every thought, not connected with him, out of her head; that as he was now

convalescent, she turned with pleasure to my proposal, admitted the liberality of the settlement offered, and would be in London in a day or two, when every preliminary for the marriage could be finally arranged.

My feelings on reading this characteristic epistle were anything but of a joyous nature. It was unaccompanied by a single line, or even message from Arabella, indeed her name did not even once occur in the letter, an omission that both offended and disgusted me.

They arrived in two days, and I almost got rid of my doubts and fears when I saw Arabella, in increased beauty and animation, meet my greetings with unrepressed symptoms of complacency. The arrangements for our marriage were put *en train;* but, with what different feelings did I enter into them, to those which influenced me on the former occasion. Though I still admired Arabella's beauty, and felt her fascination, yet the passion she excited, if passion it might be called, was of a nature that

reflected little honour on the inspired or inspirer. It was unrefined by the tenderness that ever accompanies real love, and unredeemed by the respect which hallows that sentiment, and robs it of all *grossierté*. All thoughts connected with my gentle Louisa, even in the heyday of our love, were characterized by a purity that led me to imagine her an angel, sent by mistake into this terrestrial sphere, through whose guidance I might become worthy of Heaven; but Arabella, I looked on as a woman fitted only to chain a man to earth, by her blandishments and personal charms. The two Cupids, Anteros and Eros, described by the ancients as governing the pure and impure passions of love, had presided over my two very different attachments, and their effects on my mind, had been obvious. Louisa's influence would have purified any heart where she might have reigned; whereas Arabella's would but have sullied it.

It was at this period that the miniature, now before me, became mine. I had expressed a

desire to have a portrait of my intended wife; but, observing that her aunt seemed unaccountably disposed to postpone its being painted until after our marriage, I, with the usual pertinacity of my character, determined on having it finished forthwith; and took her to one of the most celebrated of our artists of that epoch, to whom I paid what was then considered an extravagant price. My vanity was not a little mortified by observing that my future bride seemed much more occupied by the preparations for her *trousseau* than by the donor of it; and evinced a taste, or rather let me say a passion, for jewels and Cashmeres, which indicated that the organ of acquisitiveness was, as phrenologists would say, very largely developed in her. I was continually told by Mrs. Spencer of the magnificence of the diamonds, and rare beauty of the emeralds, presented by all the men similarly situated with myself to their future brides; Arabella observing that, for her part, she envied not the diamonds of one, or the emeralds of

another, but she owned to the soft impeachment of liking rubies and sapphires excessively, and almost looked with envy at those presented by Sir Frederick Vandeleur to her friend, Miss Meadows.

In short, I received many hints of what *I* was *expected* to give, with as many disparaging observations on *what* I *had* given; and I was weak enough to incur considerable expense to gratify the implied wishes of my future wife.

Mrs. Spencer had removed to a villa at Richmond, to which I daily bent my course. I was in the habit of arriving there generally about three o'clock; and had constantly met on my route an extremely good-looking young man, whose fashionable air and dress formed a striking contrast with the wretched looking hack on which he was mounted. I had so repeatedly encountered this equestrian, that his face became familiar to me; and I set it down in my mind, that he was some spoilt son, returning from a daily visit to an exigent mother, or else

a lover, returning from a stolen interview with the sultana of some Crœsus of the city, during the absence of the said rich, if not wise man of the East. He seemed to regard me with a certain air of *fierté* and ill-humour, that was unaccountable in a total stranger; except by imagining that he had surmised my suspicions of his erratic visits, and dreaded my being some busybody, who might betray them.

I had been to Rundle and Bridges' one day, selecting jewels, and had far exceeded the sum I intended to expend there; incited to this extravagance, I frankly own, much more by the broad hints of the aunt, and implied, rather than expressed desires of her niece, than by any spontaneous generosity. Lured by the beauty of the trinkets, and their "appropriateness to each other," as the bowing shopman observed, I was rash enough to conclude my purchases by a necklace of rubies, set in diamonds, requiring ear-rings, brooches, head ornaments, and bracelets, *en suite.*

Thus, instead of the few hundreds I had intended to disburse, I found, on a hasty and reluctant retrospect of my expenditure, that I must have dissipated some thousands; and I consequently returned from Ludgate-hill, feeling that species of self-dissatisfaction and ill-humour which a man, who is not quite a fool, never fails to experience when he has consciously committed a folly. In this state of mind I entered my club, to dine; when, not wishing to encounter any of my acquaintances, I ensconced myself in a corner of the large room, and had an Indian screen, of vast dimensions, so placed, that I was isolated from the general mass, and could not be seen by any new-comers.

While I was discussing my solitary repast, I heard voices, familiar to my ear, command dinner to be brought to them at the table next to mine, and only divided from me by the screen. When I recognised the tones of Lord Henry and Sir John, for whose vicinity at that period I felt no peculiar desire, I congratulated

myself on the precaution which had induced me to use this barrier.

"When did you come to town?" asked Lord Henry.

"I only arrived an hour ago," was the reply.

"I came late last night, and am on my way to Avonmore's."

"Have you heard that our pretty friend, Arabella Wilton, is going to be married? and to Lyster too?"

"*Est il possible?*"

"Yes, positively to Lyster, whom we have heard her abuse and ridicule a thousand times."

I felt my ears begin to tingle, and verified the truth of the old proverb, "Listeners never hear good of themselves."

"By the by, *you* were a little smitten there, and at one time I began to think you had serious intentions, as they call it—Eh! Sir John?"

"Why, so Arabella took it into her wise head to fancy too; but, I was not quite so young as all that. No, no, Arabella is a devilish nice

girl to flirt with; but, the last, the very last, I would think of as a wife."

"Now, there I differ from you; for, she is precisely the sort of person I should think of *as a wife.*"

"You don't say so?"

"Yes, I do; but then, it must be as the wife of another; and, when she is so, I intend to be—one of her most assiduous admirers."

I felt my blood boil with indignation; and was on the point of discovering my proximity to the speakers, when Sir John resumed.

"What a flat Lyster must be, to be gulled into marrying her. I never thought they could have succeeded in deceiving him to such an extent, though I saw they were playing us off against the poor devil."

"Oh! by Jove, so did I too, and if our *supposed* matrimonial projects led to his *real* one, I don't regret it, for poor Arabella's sake; for she was most impatient to change her name."

"Only think of the aunt's sending me Lyster's letter of proposal."

" Capital, capital, the plot thickens; for, she also sent it to me."

" You don't say so?"

" I swear she did; and what is more, I can give you chapter and verse; for Lyster was so matter-of-fact in detailing his readiness to make liberal settlements, and liberal they certainly were, that I remember nearly the words of his letter to *Madame la tante.*"

" And what reason did the old she fox assign for consulting you on the subject?"

" The old one, to be sure; of considering me as a friend to the family."

" Exactly the same reason she gave for consulting me."

" She stated to me that Arabella had a positive dislike to Mr. Lyster; and she feared (mark the cunning of the old woman) that this dislike to so unexceptionable *a parti* originated in her having a preference elsewhere; and therefore *she* had determined to ask my opinion whether she ought to influence her niece to accept Lyster."

" In short, a round-about way of soliciting

you to propose for Arabella yourself. The exact sense of her letter to me."

"I dare be sworn they were fac-similes. *Madame la tante* added, that her niece was by no means committed with Mr. Lyster; for, that she had been so guarded when he asked her (on observing her coldness) if his proposal was disagreeable to her, as merely to repeat, with a shudder, the word he had uttered—disagreeable."

Well did I recollect this circumstance, trifling as it was; and overpowering were the sensations of anger and mortified vanity that oppressed me on recalling it to memory!

"Well," resumed Lord Henry, "so you wrote, as did I, to advise by all means that Mr. Lyster should be accepted?"

"Yes, precisely; for I thought it the most prudent advice from 'a friend of the family'—ha! ha! ha!—for the soul of me I can't help laughing!"

"Ha! ha! ha! nor I neither. *Both* of us consulted, and from the same motive."

"Its capital, and worthy of the old lady, who has as much cunning, and as little heart, as any dowager in the purlieus of St. James's."

"I'll lay an even wager that we twain were not the only single men consulted on the occasion."

"For my part, I should not wonder if the letters had been circular: ha! ha!"

"And how simple Lyster must be; for while the aunt was sending round his proposal to all the admirers of her niece, *he* must have been impatiently waiting for her answer."

"Luckless devil! I pity him;" (Oh! how I writhed!) "he has been atrociously taken in: yet I am glad that poor Arabella has at last secured a good establishment; for, I confess, I have a *faiblesse* for her. Indeed, to say the truth, I should have been ungrateful if I had not; for I believe—in fact, I have reason to know, that the preference to which the old aunt alluded, had more truth in it than *she* imagined."

"So *I* suspect, too; for, without vanity, I may

own, that I believe the poor girl had a *penchant* for your humble servant."

"For you?"

"Yes, for me. Is there anything so *very* extraordinary in her liking me, that you look so surprised and incredulous?"

"Why, yes, there is something devilishly extraordinary; for if I might credit Arabella's *own* assertion, her *penchant* was quite in a different quarter."

"You don't mean to say it was for *you?*"

"And what if I did? Is there anything more astonishing in her feeling a preference for *me*, than for *you*?"

"*I* merely suppose that she could not have a *penchant* for us both at the same time; and I have had reason, and very satisfactory reason too, to be satisfied that she liked me."

"And *I* can swear that I have heard her ridicule you, in your absence, until I have been compelled to take your part; though she often made me laugh, the dear creature did it so cleverly.

Ha! ha! ha! the recollection makes me laugh even now."

"And *I* have heard her attack you with such acrimony that even an enemy must have allowed that her portrait of you was caricatured; and yet, there was so much drollery in her manner of showing you up, that it was impossible to resist laughing. Ha! ha! ha!"

"Lord Henry, I beg to inform you that I allow no man to laugh at my expense."

"Permit me to tell you, Sir John, that I ask no man's permission to laugh when I am so disposed."

"Am I to consider that you mean to be personal?"

"You are perfectly at liberty to consider what you please."

"My friend shall call on you to-morrow morning, to name a place for our meeting."

"I shall be quite ready to receive him."

And *exit* Lord Henry, followed, in a few minutes, by Sir John.

And so," thought I, "here are two vain fools about to try to blow each other's brains out for a heartless coquette; and a third, perhaps the greatest fool of the three, was on the point of making her his wife. What an escape have I had! No, no, never will I marry her. She may bring an action against me for breach of promise—and she or her aunt are quite capable of such a proceeding—but be united to her I never will. Ridicule and abuse *me*, indeed! Oh, the hypocrite! And to think of all the tender speeches and loving insinuations she has lavished on me; the delicate flattery and implied deference to my opinions! Oh! woman! woman! all that has ever been said, written, or imagined against you, is not half severe enough. You are all alike, worthless and designing."

As I finished this wise and temperate soliloquy, writhing under the wounds inflicted on my *amour propre*, the gentle image of my lost Louisa seemed to reproach me for this unmanly satire against

her sex. A thousand proofs of her angelic purity and sweet simplicity of character, arose to my memory; and I felt ashamed of my injustice in thus heaping obloquy on a whole sex merely because *I* had possessed so little discrimination as to have chosen one of the most unworthy of it.

I passed a sleepless night, yet I was relieved by thinking I was now saved from becoming the husband of Arabella. I felt rebuked when I recollected how frequently the artful syren had excited my merriment by her ridicule and abuse of her other admirers. *We* had all been, as it now appeared, laughing at each other, while *she* had been mocking us *en masse*; but, like vain blockheads as we were, we never suspected that we were each in turn alike the object of her ridicule: she having had the perception to discover, that her most certain mode of acquiring an influence over the minds of her admirers, was to gratify their vanity by abusing their competitors.

I set out, at an unusually early hour, for

Richmond, determined to come to an explanation with both aunt and niece; and, shall I own it, anticipating, with a childish pleasure, their rage and disappointment at my breaking off the marriage. On arriving at the villa, I was informed that Mrs. Spencer had not yet left her chamber, and that Miss Wilton was in the garden. To the garden then I hied me, anxious to overwhelm her with the sarcastic reproaches I had conned over in my mind.

While advancing along a gravel walk, divided by a hedge from a sequestered lane, I heard the neighing and tramping of a horse; and, on looking over the hedge, discovered the lean steed on which I had so frequently encountered the good-looking Unknown on the road to Richmond. The poor animal was voraciously devouring the leaves of the hedge, his bridle being fastened to the stem of an old tree. A vague notion that the owner, who could not be far off, was now holding a parley with my deceitful mistress, instantly occurred to me, and

seemed to account for his frequent visits to Richmond. I moved on, with stealthy steps, towards a small pavillion at the far end of the garden, where I correctly concluded Arabella to be; and whence, I soon heard the sound of voices, as I concealed myself beneath the spreading branches of a large laurestinas, close to the window. I will not attempt to defend my listening, because I admit the action to be on all occasions indefensible; but the impulse to it was irresistible.

"Is it not enough," exclaimed Arabella, "that I am compelled to marry a man who is hateful to me, while my whole soul is devoted to you, but that you thus torment me with your ill-founded jealousy."

"How can I refrain from being jealous," was the rejoinder, "when I know that you will soon be another's? Oh, Arabella! if I were indeed convinced that you hated him, I should be less wretched."

"How amiable and unselfish!" thought I.

"He wishes the woman he professes to love, to be that most miserable of human beings, the wife of a man who is hateful to her, that *he*, forsooth, may be less unhappy; and he has the unblushing effrontery to avow the detestable sentiment."

"How can you doubt my hating him?" asked my syren, in a wheedling tone, "Can you *look* at *him*, and then regard *yourself* in a mirror, without being convinced, that no one who has eyes to see, or a heart to feel, could ever behold the one without disgust, or the other without admiration?"

"Oh, the cockatrice!" thought I; "and *this* after all the flatteries she poured into my too credulous ear."

Listeners beware, for ye are doomed never to hear good of yourselves. So certain is the crime of listening to carry its own punishment, that there is no positive prohibition against it: we are commanded not to commit other sins,

but this one draws down its own correction, and wo be to him who infringes it.

The speech of Arabella, which, I acknowledge, enraged me exceedingly, had a most soothing effect on my rival; for, I heard sundry kisses bestowed, as I hope, for propriety's sake, on the hand of the fair flatterer.

"Yes," resumed she, "Lyster is a perfect fright, and so *gauche*, that positively he can neither sit, stand, nor walk, like anybody else."

Oh! the traiteress! how often had she commended my air *degagé*, and the manly grace, as she styled it, of my movements. After this, who ought ever again to believe in the honied adulation of a woman?

"Now, I must disagree with you, Arabella," replied my rival (and I felt a sudden liking to him as I listened), "Lyster is a devilish good-looking fellow (I thought as much); one whom any woman whose affections were not previously engaged, might fancy."

"Let us not talk or think of him, I entreat you," said Arabella; "it is quite punishment enough for me to be obliged to *see* and *hear him* half the day, without your occupying the short time we are together in a conversation respecting a person so wholly uninteresting. Have I not refused Lord Henry and Sir John, to please you? yet you will not be content, do what I will."

"Oh, Arabella! how can you expect me to be otherwise than discontented, than wretched, when I reflect that your destiny depends not on me, and that another will be the master of your fate. *He* may be harsh, unkind; and *I*, who love, who adore you, cannot shield you from many hours of recrimination, when he discovers, and discover he must, that in wedding him you gave not your heart with your hand."

"Oh! leave all that to me to manage," said the crafty creature. "*He* is so vain and so *bête*, that it requires no artifice on my part to make him believe that I married him from motives of

pure preference. He is persuaded of it: for what will not vanity like his believe?"

"By flattery; yes, by deception and flattery—I see it all, Arabella—you have acquired an empire over Lyster by that well-known road to a man's heart, the making him believe that you love him. Had you loved *me* you would not, you could not, have been guilty of this deception: and in thus deceiving him you have," (and the poor young man's voice trembled with emotion) "wounded me to the soul."

"You really are the most wrong-headed person in the world," said his deceitful companion. "Here am I, ready to sacrifice myself to a rich marriage, to save *you*, Edward, from a poor one; for, to marry a portionless girl like me would be your ruin, and I love you too well, ungrateful as you are, to bring this misery upon you. When you come as a visitor to my house, and see me in the possession of comforts and luxuries *you* could not give me, you will rejoice in the prudence, ay, and generosity too, that gave me

courage to save you from a poor and wretched home, for wretched all poverty-stricken homes must be."

"And could you think my affection so light, Arabella," replied her lover, impatiently, "as to believe that I could go to *his* house and see *him* in possession of the only woman I ever loved? No! I am neither heartless nor *philosophical* enough to bear this. Such a position would drive me mad."

"Then, what am I to think, what am I to make of you?"

"Not a villain! a mean, base villain, who betrays hospitality, and consents that the woman he loves shall pursue a conduct at once the most vile, deceitful, and dishonourable!" and he positively wept. His passionate grief seemed to touch even the marble heart of his callous mistress; for, she gently asked him, why he had ever appeared to agree to her wedding another.

"Can you ask me?" replied he. "I knew you to be fond of luxury and display, which,

alas! my limited fortune could never bestow. I feared, trembled at the idea of beholding you pining for the enjoyments *I* could not afford; and it seemed to me less wretched to know you in the full possession of them with another, than lamenting their privation with me. It was for *you*, Arabella, conscious as you are how fondly, how madly, I dote on you, to offer to share my poverty, and not for me to compel you to it. Had you really loved me, this course you would have pursued."

"But, I tell you, I do love you; and will prove my truth by following your wishes, if you will but express them," said Arabella, melted by his grief and tenderness.

"If you really *do* love me, why may not a modest competence content you? I would have you break off this hateful marriage, and accept love in a cottage with me. My grandmother would soon forgive our stolen union, for she likes me so well that she would quickly learn to like *her* who made my happiness. But, alas!

even she, good and indulgent as she is, has often told me that *you* were as little disposed to marry a poor man, as your aunt could be to give you to such a husband."

"It was very uncivil of your grandmother to say so, and still more so of you to repeat it. "But, bless me (touching a repeater I had given her a few days before), how late it is! Lyster will be here almost immediately; and if he should find you"——

"Your marriage with him would be broken off. Yes, I will leave you, Arabella; and meet this happy man whose wealth has won you from me. Oh! how I have loathed his face of contentment, as I have passed him on the road and thought that *he* was privileged to approach you; while *I* must seek you, by stealth, and leave you to make room for him. I can bear this no longer, Arabella; you see me now for the last time, unless you accept me for your husband."

And, so saying, he rushed from her presence.

mounted his lean steed, and was heard galloping along with a speed that indicated the troubled state of his mind.

"Poor Edward!" exclaimed Arabella, "heigh ho! I wish he were rich, for I *do* like him better than I ever liked any one else. And *he*, too, is the only one of all my admirers who loves me for myself; the *rest* but love me for my flattery. Lord Henry, Sir John, ay, even this dolt who is about to wed me, all have been fascinated, not by my beauty (and for this I loathed them), but by my flattery. By *this*, I have charmed, by *this* I have won a husband. Poor Edward, it was not so with him; but love in a cottage—I hate cottages—and then (in a few years) to see it filled with a set of little troublesome brats, and hear them screaming for bread and butter! No, no, these hands 'looking at them' were never formed to cut bread and butter, like Werter's *Lolotte*; or to make pinafores, like good Mrs. Herbert, the wife of the half-pay captain, in the little cottage down the lane."

"And yet they might be worse employed, fair lady," exclaimed I, vaulting into the room.

Arabella uttered a faint shriek, turned to a death-like paleness, and then became suffused with the crimson blushes of shame.

"I have witnessed your stolen interview with my favoured rival; rival no longer, for here I resign all pretensions to your hand."

She attempted to utter some defence, but I was not in a humour to listen to what lengths her duplicity and desire for a rich husband might lead her; so, *sans ceremonie*, I interrupted her by saying, that what I had witnessed and heard, had produced no change in my previously formed resolution of breaking off the marriage. She sank into a chair; and even I pitied her confusion and chagrin, until I recollected her comments on my "*gaucherie*," and the polite epithet of "a perfect fright," with which she had only a few minutes before honoured me. I can *now* smile at the mortification my vanity *then* suffered: but, at the time, it was no laughing matter with me.

I left Arabella to her meditations, which, I dare be sworn, were none of the most agreeable; and returned to the house to seek an interview with her aunt. That sapient lady met me, as was her wont, with smiles on her lips, and soft words falling from them.

"Look here, *dear* Mr. Lyster," said she, holding out an ecrin towards me, "did you ever see anything so beautiful as these rubies set in diamonds? Are they not the very things for our beloved Arabella? How well they would show in her dark hair; and how perfectly they would suit the rich, warm tint of her cheeks and lips. None but brilliant brunettes should ever wear rubies. Are you not of my opinion; and do you not think that this *parure* seems made for our sweet Arabella?"

I mastered myself sufficiently to assent with calmness to her observations, when she immediately resumed: "Oh, I *knew you* would agree with me, our tastes are so exactly alike. I was sure, my *dear* Mr. Lyster, you would at once

select this in preference to emeralds or sapphires, which suit *fade*, blonde beauties better; but for our sparkling Arabella, rubies and diamonds are the thing. Yet, how grave you look;—bless me! what *is* the matter? Perhaps, after all, *you* do *not* like rubies and diamonds; and in that case, though (*entre nous*) I *know* that our darling Arabella dotes on them, I am sure she would prefer having only the ornaments which *you* like, for she is the most tractable creature in the world, as you must have observed. So, confess the truth, you do *not* admire this *parure?*"

"Why, the truth is," said I, taking a spiteful pleasure in raising her expectations, that her disappointment might be the greater, "I yesterday bought at Rundle and Brydges', a *parure* of rubies and diamonds more than twice the size of the one before me, and set in the best taste"—alluding to the very purchase for which I had been blaming myself, when I overheard the dialogue between Lord Henry and Sir John.

"Oh! you dear, kind, generous creature,

how good of you! How delighted our sweet Arabella will be. Have you brought it with you? I am positively dying with impatience to see it."

"Then, I fear, madam," replied I, with sternness, "that your curiosity will never be gratified."

"Why, what a strange humour *you* are in, my *dear* Mr. Lyster—nephew, I was going to call you; but I shan't give you that affectionate appellation while you are so odd and so cross. And why am I not to see them, pray? Surely you do not intend to prevent my associating with my sweet child when she becomes your wife? No, you never could be so cruel." And the old hypocrite laid her hand on my arm in her most fawning manner.

"I have no intention, madam, of separating two persons who seem so peculiarly formed for each other."

"Good creature! How kind of you, *dear* Mr. Lyster; how happy you have made me; I felt

so wretched at the thoughts of our sweet Arabella's being taken from me, for I have ever looked on her as if she were my own child. How considerate of you not to separate us. I am sure *she* will be delighted; and *I* shall be the happiest person in the world to give up the cares and trouble of an establishment of my own, which, at my advanced age, and deprived of Arabella, would be insupportable. Believe me, most cheerfully, nay, gladly, shall I avail myself of your kind offer, and fix myself with you, and my affectionate child."

The old lady was so delighted at the thought of this plan, that she made more than one attempt to embrace her dear nephew, as she now called me, and it was some minutes before I could silence her joyful loquacity; during which time, I will candidly own, I had a malicious pleasure in anticipating the bitter disappointment that awaited her. When, at length, she had exhausted her ejaculations of delight, I thus sternly addressed her:—

"When I declared my intention, madam, of

not separating you and your neice, I did not mean to ask *you* to become a member of my family. I simply meant to state that I did not intend depriving you of the advantage of *her* society, as I have determined on not marrying her."

"Good heavens! what do I hear?" exclaimed Mrs. Spencer. "What *do* you, what *can* you mean, Mr. Lyster? It is cruel thus to try my feelings; you have quite shocked me; I—I—am far from well."

And her changeful hue denoted the truth of the assertion.

"Let it suffice to say, madam, that I last evening heard Lord Henry and Sir John declare the extraordinary confidence you had reposed in them; that you had not only sent to each, my letter of proposal to your neice, but betrayed to them her more than indifference towards me, and the very words in which she expressed herself, when I made her the offer of my hand."

"How base, how unworthy of Lord Henry

and Sir John," said Mrs. Spencer, forgetting all her usual craft, in the surprise and irritation caused by this information. "Never was there such shameful conduct."

"You are right, madam," replied I, "the conduct practised on this occasion has been indeed shameful; luckily for *me*, the discovery of it has not been too late."

"If you are so dishonourable as not to fulfil your engagement," said the old lady, her cheeks glowing with anger, and her eyes flashing fury, "be assured that I will instruct my lawyer to commence proceedings against you, for a breach of promise of marriage; for, I have no notion of letting my injured neice sit quietly down, a victim to such monstrous conduct."

"I leave you, madam," replied I, "to pursue whatever plan you deem most fitting, to redress *her* grievances, and blazon forth to the world, your own *delicate* part in the Comedy of Errors; the *denouement* of which is not precisely what you could have wished. However, as comedies

should always end in a marriage, let me advise you to seek a substitute for your humble servant."

Then, bowing low to my intended aunt, I left her presence for ever: and returned to London with a sense of redeemed freedom that gave a lightness to my spirits to which they had been a stranger, ever since the ill-omened hour of my proposal to Arabella.

Of all the presents that had found their way to the villa, and they were not, "like angel visits, few, and far between," but many and costly, not one, except my portrait, was ever returned. I retained that of Arabella; not out of love, heaven knows, but because I wished to preserve a memento of the folly of being caught by mere beauty; and as it had cost me a considerable sum, I thought myself privileged to keep it, as a specimen of *art*.

Lord Henry and Sir John fought a duel, the day after their altercation at the Club, in which the first was mortally wounded; and the latter consequently compelled to fly to the Continent.

In a week from the period of my last interview with Arabella, and her aunt, the newspapers were filled with accounts of the elopement of the beautiful and fashionable Miss Wilton with Lieutenant Rodney of the Guards. It was stated that the young lady had been on the eve of marriage with the rich Mr. L. of L. Park, but that Cupid had triumphed over Plutus; and the disinterested beauty had preferred love in a cottage with Lieut. Rodney, to sharing the immense wealth of her rejected suitor, who was said to wear the willow with all due sorrow.

The grandmother of the new Benedick showed to half a dozen of her most intimate friends, the letter written by him to announce to her, that his "adored Arabella had broken through all her engagements with Mr. Lyster, the *rich* Mr. Lyster, for him." The half dozen intimate friends repeated it, as in duty bound, to half a hundred of their intimate friends, who sent it forth to the world with all the additions that the imagination of each could suggest. Arabella

was pitied, praised, or blamed, by turns; and I was represented as a heartless brute, who, knowing that her affections were engaged to another, had, aided by her mercenary aunt, tried to force this model of disinterested love and constancy into a marriage.

Two years after her union, Arabella eloped with a young nobleman remarkable for weak intellect and large fortune; leaving her betrayed husband deeply embarrassed by her extravagance, and with an infant daughter to bear through life, the stigma entailed on her by a mother's guilt. Subsequently to the event, I had it in my power to render a signal service to Mr. Rodney; and it gratified me to do so, as I had never forgotten his good-natured defence of my person against the attack of his hypocritical wife. This unprincipled woman was soon deserted by her lover for some fairer face; and having dragged on a miserable existence of sin and shame for a few years, died unmourned, in poverty and disgrace.

MY THIRD LOVE.

The treatment I had experienced from the faithless Arabella influenced my conduct long after I had ceased to remember her, and its effects were baleful. Disgusted with the thoughts of marriage, I turned my attention to flirtations with married women, that most demoralizing of all fashionable follies, if what so frequently leads to crimes of a deep die may be so lightly named; and, strange to say, rarely were my attentions repulsed, even by those who would have shuddered at vice, could they have beheld it devoid of the blandishments with which sophistry, false sentiment, and meretricious refinement delight to adorn it. No, women, whose principles might successfully combat the assaults of vicious pas-

sion, too frequently, by the levity with which they permit, if not encourage flirtations, lead the world to form the most injurious conclusions; and, while their reputations are the sport of scandal, console themselves with the futile reasoning, that, as they have not incurred actual guilt, they have nought with which they need to reproach themselves.

This species of folly is unknown on the Continent, where, though the women are much less virtuous than our own, a greater degree of external decorum, and respect for appearances, exists. They, while too frequently violating virtue, pay it the homage of assuming its outward decencies; a species of artifice which the great majority of our females, satisfied with not outraging the reality, totally disregard.

I know this assertion, as to the superior appearance of outward decorum in continental ladies, will be cavilled at; but, the cavillers will be confined to those who have not had personal opportunities of judging, and I beg it may be

remembered, I am referring to the semblance, and not to the reality of virtue.

Will my readers forgive this digression? I warned them, at the commencement of my confessions, that I was given to digress; and, alas! age does not diminish this failing. The truth is, I have much to say of all I saw and experienced during the interval of my breaking off with Arabella, and forming another attachment. Yet, as the confession might compromise others, never shall the veil, that covers the errors of those who smiled on me, be removed by *my* hand: and never *shall* the grand-daughters of the present generation, have the blush of shame brought to their cheeks by my recital of the failings of their fair but frail grandmothers, many of whom resembled the spear of Achilles, which if it made wounds, was ready to heal them.

Let my readers then imagine, that two years were passed in the vortex of fashion; that I was by turns a victim, or a dupe, to the passions that mislead men in that maze of folly; and

that, such were its debasing effects, I learned to view vice without disgust, and to consider virtue, a phantom.

It was at this period, that I first encountered the beautiful Lady Mary Vernon. Ay, there is her portrait; yet, exquisitely lovely as it is, how far short does it fall of the original, when I first beheld her. There are her soft, melancholy eyes, that seemed as if they were only made to look at the heavens, so sublime, yet chastened, is their expression. There is her lofty and expansive forehead; never had intellect a fairer throne; and those gently curved raven brows, that lent such a character of pensiveness to her face. How beautiful was the almost transparent paleness of her cheek, the paleness of high thought, not disease. Yes, Lady Mary's was a countenance, once seen never to be forgotten: it was the face we picture to ourselves of a saint, rather than that of an angel, for it denoted that she had known suffering and sorrow; though purity shone so conspicuously in its every lineament,

that no one could behold her, without a conviction that hers was a spotless mind.

It was at the Duchess of D——'s that I first met her; and, though accustomed to see beauty in all its forms, hers made such an impression on me, that I could scarcely withdraw my eyes from her face. Lady C. asked and obtained permission to present me; and I approached her, internally hoping, with my accustomed vanity, that I might soon discover the art of thawing the frozen coldness of her looks. Her voice was low, yet distinct and harmonious, beyond any voice I had ever heard; and who is insensible to this powerful attraction in a female? an attraction that frequently atones for the want of all others. She looked full in the face of the person she addressed, with an expression of such calmness and purity, that the most reckless libertine could not have hazarded a light word, or indulged a gross thought, in her presence. The men approached her with an air of reverential deference; and even the women, the most re-

markable for their levity, assumed a decorous reserve, as if rebuked by the dignified modesty of her demeanour. Such was the respect with which she soon inspired me, that I felt discomposed at seeing some of my female acquaintances, whose purity I had reason to doubt, address her; it seemed to me as if the very atmosphere she breathed, ought not to have been profaned by their presence.

I should have judged her manner to me as being cold and reserved, beyond even the general reserve adopted towards a stranger, had I not observed that it was equally so to all the other men who addressed her; except a certain old white haired admiral, whose visage resembled a frosted saffron cake, to whom she extended her hand, with a cordiality that formed a striking contrast to her coldness towards all the others of his sex. My female acquaintances were not slow at discovering the profound admiration with which Lady Mary inspired me; and many and bitter were the sarcasms with

which they commented on it. One said, that she was a tiresome prude, who threw a constraint over every circle into which she came; another observed, that it was no wonder her husband avoided her, for she was too good to be agreeable; and a third remarked, that, notwithstanding her extreme prudery and frigidity, she did not dislike admiration. My respect for the ladies, who thus censured Lady Mary, had long vanished; but now, I positively detested them.

Anxious to discover something of the history of my idol, for, even already, she was enshrined as such in my heart, I asked a dowager of my acquaintance, not more esteemed for her frankness, though it sometimes degenerated into *brusquerie*, than beloved for her goodness of heart, who was Lady Mary; adding, that it was strange I had never heard of her before.

"It would have been more strange if you had," replied she, "for Lady Mary Vernon is not a woman who is talked about. Nothing can

be said of her, except that her mind and life are as faultless as her beauty; and such women are seldom much discussed in society. She is the daughter of the Duke of A., and the wife of Mr. Vernon, one of the richest commoners in England."

"He may well be considered an object of envy in possessing such a wife," said I.

"So thinks not *he*," resumed the dowager; "at least, if we may judge by his conduct; for, he totally neglects this lovely creature, and bestows all his time, and, scandalous people say, most of his money too, on a certain lady, whose bad conduct is no longer apocryphal, though she is still tolerated in society. But Mr. Vernon," continued the old lady, "resembles most of you men, who are more prone to admire a meretricious beauty, with whom you are perfectly at your ease, than a woman of refinement and dignified manners; who neither flatters your vanity by her *words*, nor permits you to mislead the world into false conclusions by her *actions*.

Half your sex run after a woman, *not* because you individually admire her, but because it gratifies your inordinate *amour propre*, to appear preferred by one, who has a train of adorers; though this very circumstance ought to create any sentiment but admiration, as it clearly implies an unpardonable levity, if no worse, on the part of the lady. See Mrs. Mortimer, the woman Mr. Vernon prefers to his wife,—for the fact is so well known, and the lady takes so little pains to disguise it, that I may name her without being considered censorious,—well, see this woman enter a ball-room, or a rout, and she will excite what is called a sensation. Men will crowd round and follow her, the herd will believe that this public homage is a proof of her charms, a belief in which the poor weak, vain, woman will also indulge; while Lady Mary Vernon, whose beauty admits not of a doubt, is neither tumultuously surrounded nor ostentatiously followed by your sex, for the very best reason, no one dare presume to affect familiarity with

her. Yet many of you, and probably her foolish husband amongst the number, conclude that the followed lady must be the more captivating, and urged by vanity, increase the crowd of her admirers."

I endeavoured to deprecate the severity of the dowager against my sex; and then asked, how long Lady Mary had been married, and if hers had been what is called a love match.

"Yes, quite a love match on both sides; and it is said that, though her husband's attachment survived not the first year of their union, hers still exists in all its pristine force."

"How strange," replied I, "that he could cease to love a woman, whose personal attractions are, as your ladyship affirms, nearly equalled by her mental ones."

"Not at all strange," she rejoined, "if one reflects on the selfishness, the frivolity, and the imbecility of the generality of our men of fashion. Attracted by the beauty of a woman, as they are by that of a horse, a picture, a statue, or any

other object, the possession of which is likely to excite the envy of their acquaintances, they eagerly seek to attain it. The novelty worn off, what remains? Incapable of appreciating the mental qualifications of their wives, or of feeling the thousand nameless charms that exist in the sacred union of congenial sentiments, and the endearing ties of habit, which in well regulated minds and warm hearts, 'render the wife dearer than the bride;' the heartless voluptuary of modern days turns from the beauty he has won, to seek, *not* a fairer, but a newer, face; leaving the disappointed, and often wretched wife, to weep over his neglect, or to resent it to her own undoing. His club, the gaming table, Newmarket, and field sports, occupy his time so much, as to leave little, if any of it, to bestow on her, he had chosen, 'for better and for worse, in sickness and in health:' and she has reason to be thankful if, in addition to neglect, he does not give her the mortification of *seeing* or *hearing* of his preference for another, that other, too

frequently, one of the most worthless of her sex."

"Is Lady Mary Vernon aware of her husband's *liaison* with Mrs. Mortimer?" asked I.

"How could she remain ignorant of it;" replied the *brusque* dowager, "with half a hundred *kind* friends to irritate her lacerated heart by their insulting pity; or to pique her pride by unavailing attempts to comfort her. In all the trials of life, but more especially in trials of the heart, be assured that there is nothing like a friend for envenoming the wounds. I am an old woman, Mr. Lyster, have seen much, perhaps too much, of the world, and its knowledge has convinced me, that no persons so closely resemble *enemies* as friends; the only difference between them is, that the *first* injure without any attempt to impose on you by an assumption of good will; while the *second* inflict a deeper injury, professing, like the surgeon who probes his patient's wound, that it is for his good.

"No, poor Lady Mary has too many *friends*,

to be left in blissful ignorance of the evil doings of her husband.—Anonymous letters, 'prating of his whereabouts,' were poured in on her; she was advised by one friend to separate from him; by another, to divorce him; *and* by *all*, to adopt some decided line of conduct that would make him ashamed of himself. This last advice she has, *I* think, judiciously followed; while *they* partly in disgust at her forbearance, and still more at her rejection of their interference, rail at her want of spirit, shrug their shoulders, shake their heads, and now suffer her to pursue her own course without further opposition, saying, that for so tame spirited a woman there is nothing to be done."

"What then is the course that she has adopted?" inquired I.

"The only course a sensible woman, who loves, and wishes to reclaim her husband, can adopt," answered the dowager. "She treats him with invariable gentleness; makes him no reproaches, hides her tears, and welcomes him to his home, whenever he returns to it."

How well did this account of her conduct accord with the mild and beautiful countenance of Lady Mary! I almost loved my loquacious dowager for being able to appreciate her, and listened with a breathless interest to every word that fell from her lips.

"There, there, just entering the room, is Mr. Vernon," resumed Lady Glanmire; "speak of the evil one, and he appears.—How self-satisfied he looks; it positively makes me angry to see him!"

My eyes followed the direction pointed out by Lady G., and encountered a singularly handsome man. I turned to observe Lady Mary, whose cheeks assumed as deep a blush on seeing him, as probably his first declaration of love to her had elicited. He either did not, or would not observe her; at least, he betrayed no symptom of recognition, but seemed sedulously searching for some more attractive object. In a few minutes his countenance brightened, and he approached the celebrated Mrs. Mortimer. I looked again at Lady Mary, and never shall I

forget the expression of her face. It had become of a marble paleness; her brows were contracted, as if some violent, but subdued pang, tortured her; and her lips were compressed, as if to restrain the utterance of her anguish. I expected to see her faint; but I knew not then what woman *can* bear; I knew not that fine union of exquisite sensibility and modesty, which calls up fortitude to guard both from exposure to the crowd. Lady Mary looked the very personification of a martyr, about to suffer in support of her faith, as she slowly retired from the room, to avoid seeing her husband lavish on another, those attentions which he had long ceased to bestow on her. How I hated him at the moment! and how I despised the worthless woman, who seemed to occupy all his thoughts. Heavens! what a contrast, did her meretricious beauty, and the coarse gaiety of her manner, present to the classical loveliness, and dignified demeanour of Lady Mary!

I sauntered up towards the sofa, on which

Mrs. Mortimer and her lover had seated themselves, evidently as little restrained in their flirtation, by the presence of the crowd around them, as if they had been alone. For a flirtation, however, there is certainly no place like a crowded rout. Oh! the things I have seen and heard therein, without any one appearing either surprised or shocked!! Mrs. Mortimer was considered the Calypso of her day; but her charms being now considerably on the wane, she tried to repair them, much on the same principle, and with much the same effect, that experienced dealers adopt in their restoration of old pictures. Still she was, and particularly by candle-light, a fine, or what artists call, a picturesque woman; and, from the peculiar character of her beauty, might have served as a good model for a painter, wishing to pourtray the unchaste wife of Potiphar. Her large bold eyes met those of her lover, for such it was plain he was, with an expression, from which I turned with loathing; and her ungloved hand was suffered to rest in his, be-

neath the folds of her India shawl, which was conveniently draped to conceal this violation of decency. I felt my anger and indignation excited by their undisguised, and disgusting freedom of manner, in presence of one of the most fashionable circles in London; a circle in which their relative position seemed to be as perfectly understood, as, I regret to add, perfectly tolerated: and I left the apartment, sick at heart, and out of humour with the world.

In the ante-room I found Lady Mary Vernon waiting for her carriage; and as the groom of the chambers at that moment announced it, I offered my arm to conduct her to it. For my soul I could not force my lips to utter a single one of the common-place phrases, men address to women on similar occasions; but, feeling her arm tremble within mine, I ventured to observe, that I feared she was ill.

"Very slightly so;" was the answer. "The sudden transition from a heated room to the cold

air, often produces a nervous trembling of my frame that quickly subsides."

I handed her to her carriage and saw it drive off, scarcely aware that I was standing uncovered at the bottom of the steps at —— House, and only remembering that her arm had rested within mine, that my hand had touched hers;—and never had the touch of mortal produced such a sensation on man! No, none but a pure minded and chaste woman could excite such sensations. There was awe mingled with the passionate love, the exquisite pleasure, that sent the blood tingling through my veins; and I mentally vowed that no man should ever have the arm of my wife within his, if wife I ever had. I longed to press my lips on the sleeve on which her beautiful hand had rested. I thought of her as some bright vision; and the melting tones of her voice still sounded in my ear. I felt something soft under my foot; and, on looking, perceived that it was her bouquet, which had fallen as she entered

her carriage. I snatched it up and placed it in my breast, as if I had found the most precious treasure; and was retreating to seek for my servant, when I overheard a link boy observe to another,

"I say, Bill, that there fine gemman seems tarnation fond of poseys. Did you see how he cotched up that nosegay as the pale-faced lady let fall?"

"Yes, I seed it fast enough," replied Bill; "I suppose as how he's her sweetheart; for them there quality folks be mighty fond of love making; bekase as how, they have nothing else in the world to do."

At this moment, the carriage of Mrs. Mortimer was called, and I saw Mr. Vernon conduct her to it, and enter it as if he were its master. Then, one of the two tall footmen behind it, uttered an energetic "Home!" and I observed the knowing winks and smiles, and heard the ribald jests exchanged by the liveried gentry around, as the profligate pair were whirled off

to the mansion of the husband she had betrayed and dishonoured.

I entered my house a changed man; every feeling, every thought, having Lady Mary for its object. When my eyes fell on different articles of *virtù* in my chamber, given to me by other women, I turned from them with disgust, to kiss, again and again, the bouquet of withered flowers that she had touched; and I valued it, oh! how much the more, when I recollected that *she* would not have *given* it to any man on earth, save to her unworthy husband.

Were women but conscious of the estimation in which even the slightest favour is held, when she who accords it is known to be pure and virtuous, how cautious would they be in granting a thousand little frivolous *cadeaux* to which, though *they* attach no importance, others prefix ideas that lead to very injurious conclusions. Could they, too, but hear the conversations of their favourite beaux, at the clubs they frequent, how would they blush and tremble at the false, the

often odious interpretations, given to actions to which, if fairly judged, youthful imprudence or levity could alone be attributed.

But, to return to the antipodes of levity, Lady Mary, and her faded bouquet. Perhaps some of my readers will smile when I assert, that from that night I have never met the mingled odours of the rose, jasmine, and verbena, without their bringing the image of that lovely woman to my memory, as vividly as though I had seen her but a few hours before. How I loathed her husband for slighting her! and yet, perhaps, I should have hated him still more had he evinced for her, at least in my presence, any marks of that passionate love which was now consuming my heart.

A few days after my memorable interview with Lady Mary, having sauntered into the fashionable jeweller's of that day, to make a purchase, I saw some very splendid diamonds, which one of the shopmen was placing in a case. Observing that they had caught my eye, he civilly

laid the *etui* before me; and called my attention to a very large sapphire, which formed the centre of one of the bracelets belonging to the *parure*, and which, he said, he considered to be the most perfect stone that had ever passed through his hands. He added, that it had been sold at a very high price; and in order to show me the stone in its transparent setting, he touched a secret spring, when the gold plate at the back flying open, discovered a small enamel miniature of Mr. Vernon; the resemblance being so striking as to leave no doubt of its identity. The man had only closed the *etui* when the original of the portrait entered, ordered the case to be placed in his curricle, and drove off. I could not resist the impulse that induced me to follow the route he had taken; and I was only confirmed in the surmise I had formed as to the destination of the jewels, when I saw him stop at the door of Mrs. Mortimer, and send his curricle to the next street, to wait his return.

The diamonds and sapphire of vast price, it

was plain then, were for his unworthy mistress, who, probably, only valued the miniature on account of its setting, and only tolerated the donor for the sake of his gifts. How strange appears to us the passion for jewels inherent in women in all countries and times. The extent to which it was indulged in Rome, is proved by Julius Cæsar having passed a law forbidding unmarried women to wear them. One would suppose, that a similar prohibition existed in England, inferring from the impatience the generality of our young ladies evince to be married, and the pleasure they take, when this perilous desideratum has been attained, in displaying a profusion of jewels on their persons. Nor are our matrons less addicted to this expensive passion, for were the Athenian ordination, by which an unfaithful wife was prevented from wearing jewels, carried into effect in our days, it would, I believe, be the ruin of jewellers; but might be the saving of many a man's purse, if not his honour. And yet, who knows how far such a

punishment might deter women from a breach of virtue; vanity, their besetting sin, being thus instigated to preserve, what hitherto it had assisted to overthrow; for, there is much more of *vanity* than *passion*, in nine-tenths of the *liaisons* that lead to a breach of conjugal fidelity.

Three nights after the occurrence at the jeweller's shop, I encountered Mrs. Mortimer at a ball, at Lady Baskerville's; sparkling in the very *parure* I had seen, and the well-known sapphire on her arm. Mr. Vernon, too, was there; and the lady seemed to treat him with more marked attention; the reward, as I thought, of the costly present he had made her. Lady Mary Vernon was also present, and looked, if possible, more beautiful than before. She was attired in a robe of white satin open in front, and falling in ample folds to her feet. The rich blonde lace that trimmed the dress, was clasped by black enamel ornaments, *à la Sevigné;* in the centre of each of which sparkled a large diamond. The pointed stomacher, which beauti-

fully defined her delicate waist, was confined by similar ornaments, and a necklace, and ear-rings to match, displayed the exquisite fairness of her skin. She was with an elderly lady, of a very dignified mien, who seemed wholly engrossed in a conversation with her; apparently urging her to do something, which Lady Mary declined, as I could see her wave her head, and make a motion that indicated repugnance.

I passed behind the spot where they stood, and heard the elderly lady say, in Italian, "Indeed, you are wrong, thus to shrink from *their* presence, when *yours* would probably awaken them to the impropriety of their conduct, by drawing on them the censure of the spectators of it."

"What, draw censure on *my husband?* no, not for worlds!" replied Lady Mary; "I cannot, indeed I cannot, bear to encounter them."

And as she spoke, an increased paleness, and involuntary shudder, betrayed how much even the idea of adopting such a course affected her.

I approached, and made my bow; was received with a less distant politeness than I had anticipated, though still enough reserve and gravity remained, to check a much more presuming man than I had ever been. It was evident, that the respectful deference of my manner had influenced the old lady in my favour, for she whispered Lady Mary to present me to her. No sooner was my name pronounced, than she eagerly demanded if I was the son of Lady Olivia Lyster? and on my replying in the affirmative, she told me, that my mother had been one of her oldest and dearest friends, and that she felt highly gratified at making my acquaintance. I was elated at this lucky chance, which seemed to hold forth a hope of meeting Lady Mary more frequently; for I speedily discovered that Lady Delafield (my mother's friend) was her aunt, and that they frequently saw each other.

Lady D. became quite cordial in her manner towards me; asked a thousand questions about

Lyster Park, where she had often been during my infancy; and treated me, not as a new acquaintance, but as the son of an old and dear friend. While replying to her interrogations, I thought only of her charming niece, who seemed totally abstracted, her beautiful eyes fixed on the door of the room where she knew her husband to be. Mr. Mortimer came up, and accosted Lady Mary with an air and manner, so totally devoid of any suspicion that his presence was not agreeable to her, that I felt for him, when I observed the haughty coldness with which Lady Delafield returned his salutation.

"Where is Mrs. Mortimer?" asked the unconscious husband, "I expected to find her with you."

The colour rose to the cheeks of Lady Mary at the question, and there was an evident embarrassment in her manner, as she answered, that she had not seen her.

"Not seen her!" repeated Mr. Mortimer;

" how very odd; for, she told me that she only came, because she promised to meet you."

" Very odd, indeed," said Lady Delafield, drily; " for, I venture to say that my niece was wholly ignorant of Mrs. Mortimer's intention of being here."

Lady Mary pressed the arm of her aunt, and gave her an imploring look; while Mr. Mortimer betrayed such evident symptoms of mingled surprise and displeasure, as checked Lady Delafield's further observations. He looked from the aunt, to the niece; and his face flushed, as he observed the agitation and distress, too clearly pourtrayed in the countenance of the latter, to admit of his doubting that some painful feelings were associated in her mind, with the mention of his wife. He muttered something, almost unintelligible, of his intention of seeking Mrs. Mortimer, and hurried into the next room. I saw terror impressed on the pallid face of Lady Mary; she whispered a few words to her aunt, who turned to me, and requested that I

would immediately seek Mr. Vernon, and tell him that she required his presence. I was about to say, that I did not know Mr. Vernon, but Lady Mary interrupted me by saying, "Do, pray go, and quickly, I entreat you to go;" forgetting, in her alarm and agitation, the self-control, and dignity of manner, for which she was so remarkable.

On entering the next room, I discovered Mrs. Mortimer dancing with Mr. Vernon; a circle was formed round the dancers to observe her. Her movements were such as I should never have tolerated in a wife, though they elicited general applause; and as I saw her floating through the mazy dance, I was reminded of the opinion of Sallust, who, speaking of Sempronia, the mistress of Catiline, says, "She dances with more skill than becomes a virtuous woman."

Mr. Vernon led his partner from the dance, to a sofa elevated at the end of the room, and so placed, that the persons seated on it could be

seen from all sides of the apartment. His assiduity was unremitting; he assisted to place her India shawl over her shoulders to preserve her from being chilled, and displayed all *les petits soins* that a lover employs for the object of his affections, attentions which were repaid by languishing looks of tenderness, and sweet smiles. I marked the glances exchanged by the persons around them, in which were plainly expressed the malicious pleasure that a detected intrigue seldom fails to awaken.

While I endeavoured to make my way through the crowd, to the place where they were seated, I caught a view of Mr. Mortimer; and never did I behold so fearful an expression as that which his countenance presented. Rage and jealousy strove for mastery, in the fiery glances which he bent on them; and which convinced me, that never before had he suspected either the fidelity of his wife, or the perfidy of his friend. From a state of happy security, he awoke at once to a conviction of their guilt; and

terrible were the pangs which that conviction brought him, if we might judge by its effects on his countenance. While he stood, eying the guilty pair, they, totally unconscious of his presence, were exchanging looks of love, and whispers of tenderness: thus, adding fuel to the fire that raged in the breast of the wronged and duped husband.

Fearful of some public *esclandre*, that could not fail to wring the already tortured heart of Lady Mary, I conquered my repugnance to address Mr. Vernon; and, approaching him, stated that Lady Delafield requested to see him immediately. The message seemed to annoy him and his companion; they whispered, looked confused, and after a few minutes' consultation he left her, promising to return immediately.

I mingled in the crowd, still remaining near enough to observe Mrs. Mortimer, and shortly after saw her husband walk up to her. She perceived him not until he was at her side; and, on recognizing him, started as if she had seen a

spectre, changed colour, and immediately attempted to envelope her person in the India shawl. But it resisted all her efforts to pass it over her stiffened sleeves; and her exertions only exposed still more the brilliant diamonds that encircled her arms. She was evidently struggling to acquire some portion of self-possession; and, after the pause of a moment, turned to her husband, and observed, "Who ever should have thought of seeing you here?"

"Not *you*, I am persuaded," replied he, his lips trembling with suppressed emotion. "It is fortunate, however, that I *have* come, as my unexpected presence gives me an opportunity of admiring the rare and costly jewels you wear, and which I now see for the first time."

She became as pale as death, and then blushed a deep red.

"Oh! the fact is," said she, "I hired them for this night, as I was tired of always appearing in the same ornaments."

I could observe that her husband believed the

assertion; for his features relaxed some portion of their rigid expression. She, too, perceived that he was the dupe of her falsehood, and, taking courage, she added, "I am so glad you are come, for I was wishing to go home, I feel tired and chilly."

As she thus spoke, her evil stars led her to endeavour again to wrap the shawl around her: when, in the effort to do so, one of her bracelets became unclasped and fell to the ground. In the fall, the secret spring flew open, discovering to the horrified gaze of her husband, who had stooped to take it up, the miniature of Mr. Vernon.

"And this portrait, too, was doubtlessly hired for the night," said he, fixing his petrefying glance on her face—"Come, leave this scene directly, madam; *you* and *I* have a fearful reckoning to settle, and this is no place for it."

She seemed overcome by terror and confusion, and hesitated to obey his commands. He turned fiercely towards her, seized her arm,

drew it within his, and dragged, rather than led her, through the long suite of rooms; I following to observe their movements. When they reached the drawing-room, where I had left Lady Mary and her aunt, a bustle and confusion among the company impeded the progress of Mr. Mortimer. Lady Mary Vernon had fainted; and, as is usual on such occasions, a circle had formed round her, increasing the heat and pressure, and consequently the illness for which they affected to feel such sympathy. Lady Delafield loudly entreated them to disperse, and, on their doing so, I beheld Lady Mary, as she reclined on an ottoman, supported by the Duchess of B., Lady Delafield holding to her nostrils one of the many *flacons* offered by the surrounding groups of ladies. Lady Mary presented the appearance of death; her eyes were closed, their long dark lashes throwing a more ghastly shade over the pale cheeks beneath them: yet still, though bearing the semblance of death, her matchless beauty shone

conspicuous, being not obliterated, but wearing a new character; a character that might have justified its being called the holiness of beauty, so calm, so unearthly, was its loveliness.

My heart sank within me while I gazed on that marble face; and its striking resemblance to Louisa Sydney, as I last saw her, made me shudder. At this moment, Lady Delafield caught a view of Mrs. Mortimer, and gave her a look that must have spoken daggers to her, so plainly did it say, "See what you have done."

The look was not lost on Mr. Mortimer; it seemed to increase his rage, for he pulled his terrified wife along, and descended the stairs, down which her trembling limbs could hardly support her. They had only driven off a moment, when Mr. Vernon returned from searching for his servant in the crowd. I narrowly examined his countenance, as he approached Lady Mary, who was still in a state of insensibility; and never did I behold contrition and

sorrow more clearly delineated, than in the look he fixed on her pale, but beautiful face.

"This man is not hardened in guilt, nor insensible to its fearful effects on others," thought I, as I saw him stoop to raise her tenderly from the sofa. The movement recalled her to consciousness; her lips moved, she opened her languid eyes, and fixed them on the face of her husband, with an expression of such deep, such unutterable tenderness, which, whatever might be its effect on him, sank into my very soul; and made me feel that I would sacrifice all I possessed, to have such a look fixed on me by those melting eyes.

His affectionate assiduity seemed to restore her, and she repaid it by faint smiles.

"Are you quite sure, dear aunt, that nothing dreadful has occurred?" asked Lady Mary, when Mr. Vernon had again left her, to see if the carriage was ready.

"Quite sure, my dear," replied Lady Delafield.

"Oh, what a relief! I was so alarmed by the terrible expression of Mr. Mortimer's face, that the most fearful presentiment rushed on my mind, and I felt as though I had been dying."

"Hush, hush, my dear," said Lady Delafield, "you were needlessly frightened. I am sorry that I suffered him to know the truth, as it has made you ill; but *he* must be well accustomed to the subterfuges of his worthless wife, if, indeed, she thinks it necessary to use any with him."

Mr. Vernon returned to support his wife to her carriage; and I beheld them drive off, with feelings little in harmony with the scene of splendid festivity around me, and more than ever in love with Lady Mary.

How strange is the human heart! The very tenderness I had seen her display towards another seemed to increase mine towards her. The freedom from all harshness, or reproach, with which she received his attentions, elevated her character in my estimation; and made me

view her more as an angelic being, than as a woman.

The next day, at an early hour, business having called me into the city, I was passing through Fleet Street, when I heard my name pronounced by a female voice, with an entreaty that I should enter the shop whence it proceeded. I hesitated as to whether I should comply with the request or not, when the shopman presented himself at the door, and repeated it. On entering the shop, I beheld a very respectable looking female, in a state of great agitation, who immediately appealed to me, to satisfy the owner of the shop, as to her respectability. In this person I recognised a Mrs. Tisdeal, who had lived several years, as a sort of humble companion, or upper *femme de chambre*, with my poor mother, and had been a great favourite of her's; but of whom I had lost sight for a long time.

"Oh! sir," sobbed she, "you find me here charged with theft. I have been employed to

dispose of some jewels of value: the owner wishes that her name should not be divulged; and unless I disclose it, that she may certify it was by her desire I offered her diamonds for sale, the owner of this shop threatens to commit me to prison, on suspicion that I have obtained them dishonestly. You, Mr. Lyster, who have known me for so many years, will, I am sure, answer for my character; but let me not be forced to reveal the name I so much wish to conceal."

"Look here, sir," said the jeweller, opening the case, and displaying its glittering contents: "these jewels are of too great value to be entrusted to a servant."

I started with amazement, on recognising the magnificent *parure* worn by Lady Mary Vernon the night before, which, being the first I had ever seen set in black enamel, had made an impression on my memory.

"Yes, Sir," resumed the jeweller, "these diamonds are of extraordinary beauty, and appear-

ances are very much against this person. When I required a reference, and asked the ordinary questions which a cautious and reputable buyer, under such circumstances, ought to ask, this woman betrayed evident symptoms of confusion, and declined stating to whom the jewels belong, or her own place of residence."

I assured the scrupulous shopkeeper, that I knew the female present perfectly well, and could answer for her honesty.

"Why, that's all very well, sir," said he; "but you'll excuse me if I state, that I know no more of you, than of this woman. The affair is, altogether, very suspicious—very suspicious indeed. You happen, *most opportunely*, to be passing my door, at the very moment I was going to send for the police, to take this person into custody on suspicion of robbery. She sees you, calls out to you directly, you come in, and without asking her a single question, as to how she came by the diamonds, offer to be answerable for her honesty. You'll excuse me, sir; but all this has a very

odd appearance—a very odd appearance indeed. There, John," turning to one of his shopmen; "go and call a couple of the police, for it's my opinion we shall have *two* persons to commit, instead of one."

"Why, what the devil!" said I, getting angry; "you surely cannot mean to suspect or commit *me?*"

"You'll excuse me, sir," replied the imperturbable jeweller, "but I mean to do both, unless you can forthwith satisfy me of your own respectability. This affair looks very like a conspiracy, sir, very like indeed; and your popping by so opportunely leads me to think that you are nothing more or less than a confederate of this person."

"What! suspect Mr. Lyster, of Lyster Park, one of the richest gentlemen in the county of Nottinghamshire!" exclaimed Mrs. Tisdeal, in mingled amazement and indignation.

"And you, Ma'am," said the jeweller, sneer-

ingly, "are probably one of the richest ladies in some other county. No, no, I am an old bird, and not to be caught with chaff, as the saying goes; and so I won't take your character for this gentleman, nor his, for you."

"Let me speak to you alone, for a few minutes," said Mrs. Tisdeal.

"Ay, ay," said the jeweller, "lay your heads together, and make up a good story between you. See to the door, Thomas."

"You will regret this conduct," said I, much excited by his insulting suspicions, and the gross vulgarity with which they were expressed.

Having retired to the far corner of the shop with the agitated Mrs. Tisdeal, I told her in a low voice that I recognised the jewels, having seen them the night before, but that her secret was safe with me.

"Oh! sir," said she, "my lady has the most pressing occasion for a large sum of money—not for herself, dear angel lady—but for her hus-

band. *He* is to know nothing of the sale of the diamonds, for he would never consent to it, and is to be led to believe that the money comes from my lady's aunt. Oh, sir, if this jeweller was to discover whence I come, he would go to Mr. Vernon's, and all would be known; and the mortification would be so great to her Ladyship, that, rather than expose her to it, I would suffer any indignity to myself."

"Well, I say, have you concocted your story?" asked the jeweller, with an insolent sneer, suspicion having rapidly grown into certainty.

"What is the value of these diamonds?" demanded I.

"The value?" replied he; "why, more than you'll ever come honestly by, I'm thinking."

"I ask you what is their value," resumed I, making an effort (and it required one) to master my rapidly increasing wrath.

"Well, then, their value is five thousand pounds, though, at the present time, with the scarcity of

money that exists, I doubt if they would fetch more than four thousand, five hundred."

"Give me pen, ink, and paper," asked I; a demand he more than half reluctantly complied with.

While I was writing a few lines to my bankers, Messrs. Child and Co., John, his shopman, returned with two policemen. They eyed me with looks filled with suspicion; and I overheard the sapient John remark, that "he was sure I was an old offender, for rogue was written in my face."

I wrote to request my bankers to send any one of the clerks who knew me, with bank notes to the amount of five thousand pounds, to the shop of Mr. Thompson, No. 6, Fleet Street, with as little delay as possible; and having promised Thomas, the less suspicious shopman, a reward for his trouble, I dispatched him, with my note, to the bank.

During his absence, the jeweller seemed puz-

zled what to think; poor Mrs. Tisdeal still trembled from the alarm she had undergone; and the two policemen maintained a demeanour of official gravity.

Thomas soon came back, out of breath from the speed he had made, and announced that Mr. Smith, the head clerk of the house, would soon wait on me.

This intelligence seemed to occasion the jeweller a considerable diminution of his self-complacency, and caused him to assume a somewhat less disrespectful bearing towards me. Yet, he appeared disappointed at the probability that, after all, I should turn out to be neither a thief, nor the confederate of a thief: and, vexed and annoyed as I felt at the moment, I could not help observing then, as subsequently I have frequently remarked, that the generality of suspicious persons are more irritated than gratified, at discovering innocence in the individual whom they had prejudged to have been guilty.

His countenance became perfectly ludicrous

when, *not* the head clerk of the bank, but Mr. Child himself, entered the shop; and, shaking me cordially by the hand, told me that *he* was the bearer of the five thousand pounds, because he was induced to infer, from the manner of the bearer of my letter as well as its contents, that something extraordinary had occurred.

While I explained to him the awkward predicament in which the suspicions of Mr. Thompson had placed me, it was comical to observe the countenance of that varlet. He kept bowing to the ground, repeating,

"Indeed, sir, I'm sure sir, I would not for fifty pounds that such a mistake had taken place. I hope, sir, you'll excuse me; I am quite confounded, indeed, sir; I know not what to say. Pray, Mr. Child, speak a word for me; indeed, I meant no offence; but we jewellers are obliged to be so strict, so very particular, sir."

"Yes," interrupted I, "'and I happened so *opportunely* to be passing your door,' and 'looked so like an old offender'"—glancing at the now

crest-fallen John the shopman; who, as he had emulated his master in suspicion half an hour before, now emulated him in humility, and hung his head most sheepishly, at my thus repeating his recent observations.

Mr. Child was really angry, and reprimanded the knave of diamonds; for, such he actually was, as he had been in more than one scrape for having bought stolen jewels, knowing, or at least having had cause to suspect, that they were dishonestly obtained. He wished to re-establish his injured reputation in the present instance, by displaying a more than ordinary degree of precaution; so, poor Mrs. Tisdeal and I were the victims to his new-born scruples.

Mr. Child finding that I had no carriage with me, pressed me to let him send me his; but I refused, and having procured a hackney coach, placed Mrs. Tisdeal in it, and seated myself by her side, ordered the coachman to drive to the corner of Grosvenor Square. I gave her the five thousand pounds, making her believe that I

was glad of an opportunity of purchasing so fine a set of diamonds, and that I considered them a bargain.

During our drive, she told me that she had now been three years with Lady Mary Vernon; Lady Delafield, having known her when with my mother, had recommended her to her niece, on the marriage of that lady. She added, that during the first two years her situation had been a very happy one; but, that now—and here she paused.

I told her that it was not a frivolous curiosity which led me to inquire why she no longer was happy in Lady Mary's establishment.

"Alas! sir, how can I feel happy, when I see my lady, who is an angel, if ever an angel appeared upon earth, wretched; she, that used to be so buoyant and cheerful, whose dear, sweet laugh used to gladden my ears, and whose bright, joyous looks were like sunshine to me. All is now changed; my lady's voice is never heard except in accents so low and mournful that they make

me sad; her bright looks are faded, and when she tries to smile, indeed, sir, it causes my heart to ache, her deep, melancholy eyes, and pale cheeks, seem in such marked contrast with the smile. She will sit for whole hours, sir, with her head leaning on her hand; and, though a book lies open before her, she never turns over a page. But, when she hears Mr. Vernon's step approaching, she starts up, and strives to assume a cheerful face to welcome him; and he—oh! sir, it angers me to see that he does not, or will not, notice the sad change that has come over her, she that used to be as fresh as a rose, and as blithe as a lark."

"And what, my good Mrs. Tisdeal, do you think is the cause of all this?"

"Indeed, sir, I fear that there is but too much cause; for, Mr. Vernon, who used to be the most attentive, nay, the most doting husband in the world, has now become careless, cold, and silent; absenting himself continually from home, and when there, evidently impatient to quit it. My

lady receives anonymous letters continually, sir; I know they are anonymous, because, when she opens them, she colours, and throws them in the fire. I shall never forget the first that came: she was in her dressing-room, and I delivered it to her. While she was reading it, I by chance looked in the large mirror near to which she was standing, and her appearance terrified me; she was as pale as death, sir; her eyes seemed to grow larger, and her brow contracted as if she was suffering an intense agony. Her lips were compressed, and her hand trembled so violently that she could scarcely hold the letter. Oh! how I execrated the heartless, the wicked person, that could thus rudely tear the bandage from her eyes, and plant a dagger in her heart! Surely, sir, there are few actions so vile, or so wicked, as the writing anonymous letters. I longed to throw myself at her feet, but I dared not interfere; and though my heart ached for her, I stole out of the room as if I had not observed her agitation, and remained in the ante-

chamber, fearful of withdrawing further, lest she might require my assistance.

"She did not ring for hours, but when I entered, was quite calm, sir: though I could discover, by her blanched cheek and heavy eyes, what was passing within her mind. She has never been herself from that time; and each day has seen her grow paler and more melancholy. Last night, my lady returned from a ball to which Lady Delafield had forced her to go. She came home attended by her aunt: and Mr. Vernon, who seemed most anxious and alarmed, watching over her, and holding her hand, just as he used formerly to do. Oh! sir, it made me so happy! But my lady's aunt kept hinting, and more than hinting, that all her illness was *his* doing; and this vexed him, and my lady too. Lady Delafield is an excellent lady, but she does not understand how much mischief may be done by reminding a husband of the consequences of conduct he wishes to forget. One sweet smile and kind word from the wife he has injured, would have

a better effect than all the lectures in the world; for men, sir, are always proud and wilful when they have done wrong, and must be allowed to have the triumph of having come round to the right path themselves, without having been schooled into it. I heartily wished Lady Delafield away; and so, I am sure, did my lady and Mr. Vernon. When she had gone, Mr. Vernon scarcely waited for the door to close after her, when he ran up and embraced my lady; and, indeed, sir, I saw the tears stream from both their eyes, though I left the chamber as quickly as I could.

"In an hour after, a letter was brought by Mrs. Mortimer's footman, with directions that it should be delivered immediately, as it was of great consequence. My heart misgave me when Mr. Vernon's valet asked me to tell his master that he wanted to speak to him immediately—I refused; and, would you believe it, sir, the jackanapes became quite pert and saucy, said it was as much as his place was worth to keep a note

from Mrs. Mortimer waiting, and that if *I* would not deliver his message to his master, he should take it to the door of my lady's room himself. Could gentlemen but know, sir, how they debase themselves, even in the eyes of their own servants, when they allow them to discover their vices, how careful would they be, if not to amend, at least to conceal them; for, their menials must become either the censors, or assistants of them, and that they should be either, is most degrading to a master. I trembled when I took the message, though I tried to look as unconcerned as possible. The fact is, sir, all our servants had been for some time passing their jokes and remarks on Mr. Vernon's constant visits and letters to that lady; and when her footman brought a note, he brought scandal and evil reports also; consequently, I feared the letter he now bore, might break up the good undertanding that I hoped was about to be re-established between my lady and her husband.

When I delivered the message, Mr. Vernon grew as red as fire in the face, and my lady turned as pale as marble. He went outside the door, took the note from his servant, and without breaking the seal, gave it into my lady's hands. She looked up in his face—oh! such a look of love and confidence—and said, 'No, dearest, *you* must read it, *I cannot*, ought not, it would be indelicate, unwomanly.'

"I left the room, but before the door closed, I heard him exclaim, 'How like you, my own Mary, and how unlike—' I heard no more. Early this morning, my lady came to me, and placing the jewels, you have bought, sir, in my hands, desired me to dispose of them to the highest bidder, as she had immediate occasion for the money. She told me to tell her (in case Mr. Vernon was present) that Lady Delafield had sent a letter and parcel for her, that is, if I had disposed of the diamonds. I know it cannot be for herself that my lady requires the

money; for, she is more prudent than any lady I ever knew, and never incurs a debt; so, it must be for Mr. Vernon."

Various and contending were the emotions with which I listened to Mrs. Tisdeal's prolix detail; jealousy was, however, the predominant: and, shall I confess my unworthiness, I was more than once tempted to return the jewels and get back my money, sooner than it should serve as a new bond of kindness between Lady Mary and her weak-minded husband. But my better nature triumphed. There were moments in which I felt vexed at her so readily yielding him her pardon, and accused her of weakness; however, a little reflection showed her to me in all the purity and gentleness of a pitying angel *rejoicing* over a repentant sinner, rather than as an injured wife pardoning the errors of a reclaimed husband. Thus, the nobleness of her disposition made me more deeply enamoured of her, while it forbade every hope of my passion ever meeting the least return.

"I left home, sir," resumed Mrs. Tisdeal, "at nine o'clock, and called at three jewellers before I entered the shop where you rescued me. Oh dear! how late it is!" casting her eyes up at a watchmaker's door, over which a dial marked the hour of four. "How long my lady will have thought my absence!"

I had been so engrossed by the communications Mrs. Tisdeal had been making, that I had not reflected on the impropriety of my being seen to drive up with her to Lady Mary's residence; to which we were now rapidly approaching, having entered Grosvenor Square. I had just resolved that I would endeavour to conceal myself while Mrs. Tisdeal descended, when a hackney coach that preceded us, stopped at the very door to which we were proceeding. The blinds were up, but the step was in an instant let down, and Lord Percy, a friend of mine, jumped out, evidently in a state of agitation, and hastily entered the house, leaving the coach still waiting. Mrs. Tisdeal called our coachman to let her de-

scend; and he was in the act of assisting her from the vehicle when Lord Percy returned from the hall, accompanied by half a dozen servants, opened the coach door, and, after two or three minutes' delay, I beheld them bearing Mr. Vernon, apparently, dead, or dying, in their arms.

Horror-struck at the sight, I jumped from my coach, and followed them into the hall; when Percy recognising me, whispered,

"This is a fearful business. Mortimer challenged poor Vernon, who is, I fear, mortally wounded. Good God! who is to break it to Lady Mary?"

They bore him into the library. Servants were dispatched at every side for surgeons, and Mrs. Tisdeal promised to keep Lady Mary in her dressing-room, in ignorance of the fatal event, while I ran for Lady Delafield. I met her carriage entering the Square, stopped it, and with all possible precaution told her what had oc-

curred. She made me get into the chariot and accompany her to Lady Mary's, saying, that I might be useful to her in her affliction; and I was too glad to be near the object of my idolatry not to embrace eagerly the offer. It was now that I felt for the first time the holy, the purifying effects of real love. I would have given a limb, nay, my life, to have saved that of Mr. Vernon; ay, more, I would have supported the sight of her I so passionately, so madly loved, lavishing her carresses on him, sooner than know she was wretched. His existence became to me, from this moment, of vital importance, because on it I felt her happiness, her very being depended; and every selfish sentiment faded away before the thought of her sorrow and despair.

Lady Delafield hurried up stairs as quick as her aged and trembling limbs could bear her, begging me to remain in the house until she saw me again. The servants showed me into a small ante-room that communicated with the library:

and there, I could hear the stifled groans of the wounded sufferer, as the surgeons endeavoured to extract the ball from his side.

"I feel I am dying," uttered Mr. Vernon, "let me see my wife."

There seemed to be some hesitation on the part of the surgeons; but he again demanded her presence, adding, in a faint voice,

"It is useless to torture me, life is ebbing fast, and all will soon be over."

In a few minutes, I heard Lady Mary enter the room from a private staircase; when, the ejaculation of "Oh! my poor Mary!" from Mr. Vernon, told how deep must have been that expression of anguish on her countenance which thus caused him to lose, in his pity for *her*, all sense of his own sufferings.

"Pray, madam, be composed," said one of the surgeons.

"Think not of me," replied she, in accents that made me tremble; so profound, though subdued, was the despair they denoted.

"Leave us, leave us," said Mr. Vernon, "I have much to say ere yet my strength totally fails me."

The surgeons left the library for an inner room; and I then could hear the stifled sobs of the husband, mingled with the low, sweet voice of the wife.

"You will be spared to me, my own love; the Almighty is merciful," murmured Lady Mary.

"No: Mary, my blessed Mary, I feel that my wound is mortal. I have deserved this punishment; yes, I own that I have deserved it. How could I be so infatuated, so madly infatuated, as to yield to her seductions, and forget for a moment you, who have ever been an angel to me?"

"Think not of this fatal subject now, dearest," replied Lady Mary, "think only of our cordial, our happy reconciliation of last night; when you abjured the only error of which you had to accuse yourself."

"Yes, Mary, God be thanked! I waited not for a death-bed to repent; for, I then fully de-

termined never to see *that* woman again; and had life been spared me, this resolution would have been faithfully sustained. My folly, my guilt, have led to this fatal result; and I shall be torn from you, my own Mary, just when I had re-awakened to a sense of all I owe you, without the power of atoning for the ills I have inflicted. How precious appear now the days I have wasted! Oh, Mary! what would I not give for a few months, a few weeks even, of life to be spent with you. *Her* husband challenged me; to refuse to meet him was impossible; and fondly as I would now cling to existence, I would rather die by *his* hand, than that he should have fallen by mine. I was determined not to return his fire; for, I repeat, I would not for worlds have his blood on my head. Will you forgive me, my precious Mary, for talking of *her?* But too well do I know your generous, your pitying heart, to doubt that you will pardon me. She is driven from her home, dishonoured, and an outcast; I am the cause of all the evil that has

befallen her, and it weighs heavily on my mind. Promise me, that when I am gone, you will bestow on her the means of existence."

"Doubt it not, dearest, all, everything shall be done; but, you *will* be spared to my prayers. Oh! do not say, do not think otherwise."

"Alas! my Mary, how can I deceive you? I feel that my hours are numbered: but let me conclude for ever the painful subject on which we were speaking. Even now, Mary, this wretched woman may be in want; send to her, I entreat you, sufficient supply to screen her from pecuniary difficulties. My friend Spencer will lend me a few hundreds; for, as I told you last night, I have squandered away such immense sums of late, that I have scarcely any money left at my banker's."

"My aunt has placed a large sum at my disposal, dearest love, and I shall send it to this unhappy woman immediately."

"Bless you, bless you, Mary; I *knew* you would cheerfully act as you are now doing."

The surgeons now returned to the library, and, after a short consultation, they had their patient moved to his chamber, where an opiate was administered to him. Soon after taking this medicine he fell into a slumber; and then, and not till then, did his wretched wife betray the first symptom of the dreadful effect produced on her frame by the terrible shock she had received, for she dropped from the chair into which she had sunk, in a deep swoon. I heard the whispered ejaculations of the surgeons as they assisted to bear her from the chamber, and my heart died within me as I caught their observations indicating her danger; while *I*, within a few paces of her, dared not approach her. Never was the humanizing power of sympathy more truly felt than by me at this moment; I would have faced death, I do believe, in its most fearful shape, to have seen her relieved from the weight of misery that oppressed her; and her sufferings engrossed every thought, every feeling.

Hours seemed comprised in the minutes that

elapsed during her insensibility; and never did a doting mother watch over an only child with more intense, more agonizing anxiety, than I experienced while listening for some sound to announce her return to consciousness. When she recovered, Lady Delafield came to me; and, though rarely overpowered by her feelings, she was so struck with the expression of sorrow in my countenance, that she took my hand kindly, and thanked me for the interest I evinced in the affliction of her family. The compliments she paid to my goodness of heart and *disinterested* kindness, were so unmerited, that I became confused. But even my evident embarrassment was considered by the excellent old lady as an additional proof of my goodness; and she remarked how much I resembled my dear mother at this moment, and how truly she prized my sympathy.

I hardly dared trust myself to inquire for Lady Mary; but Lady Delafield informed me that her niece was now much better, and was on her knees praying for strength *whence only* it can be

derived, to bear up against the trial that awaited her. On recovering from her swoon she had insisted on the surgeons informing her of the real state of her unfortunate husband. They wished to temporise with her; but she was inflexible; and they at length admitted, that though he might live a few days, nay, a few weeks, his death was inevitable, as the ball had entered a vital part, and could not be extracted.

"Poor, dear soul, she bore this fatal information with wonderful fortitude," continued Lady Delafield. "After a few minutes' conversation with her attendant, Mrs. Tisdeal, she seemed inspired with new energy, and imposed a task on me that I cannot, ought not, to perform; and yet, she declared, that unless it be executed she can know no rest. Perhaps you, my dear Mr. Lyster, would be my substitute on this disagreeable errand?"

I instantly offered to do any thing she wished; and she intrusted me with a small sealed packet to convey to Mrs. Mortimer, who was staying

incognita at a villa near Fulham, and to deliver it into her own hands. I asked, and obtained a ready consent to return to Grosvenor Square as soon as I should have fulfilled my mission; and again the old lady complimented me on my good nature.

I proceeded to Fulham, and, after some difficulty, succeeded in gaining admission to Mrs. Mortimer, who received me with a mingled air of pride and shame.

"I have waited on you, madam," said I, "by the desire of Lady Delafield, to deliver this parcel."

Her cheeks became suffused with a deep crimson; and with much agitation she tore open the envelope, from which dropped the five thousand pounds I had given to Mrs. Tisdeal, not three hours before.

"What does this mean, sir," asked she, haughtily: "there is not a line here," she continued, pointing to the envelope, "to explain why, or from whom, this money was sent."

"The parcel, madam, was confided by Lady Mary Vernon to her aunt, to deliver to you; but that lady feeling unequal to the task, intrusted it to me."

"Oh, then, I am to conclude, sir," said she, imperiously, "that this money is sent me by the wife, as a bribe, to induce me to forego my claims on the husband. But, she little knows me, if she supposes that, disgraced as I am, driven with ignominy from my home, owing to my ill-starred attachment to Mr. Vernon, I will now resign him for whom I have sacrificed so much. No, sir! take back this money to Lady Mary. Mr. Vernon is too much a man of honor to abandon the woman he has ruined; and I" (here she burst into tears) "have paid too dearly for his affection, to relinquish my claim to it now, when I have nought left beside."

"Madam, you must make up your mind to this sacrifice," replied I.

"Never, never, sir," interrupted she.

"Alas, madam, it no longer depends on *your* will. The separation is inevitable."

"You do not mean to say that *he* is so weak, so vacillating, as to consent to it?" demanded she, with anger flashing from her eyes. "If so, his conduct is shameful, and merits my contempt."

"Mr. Vernon is at present, madam," resumed I, "entitled to the pity of all; for, he is on the bed of death, to which his errors have untimely conducted him."

"On the bed of death!" shrieked Mrs. Mortimer; "*he*, who last night was in perfect health? No, you deceive me: it is not—it cannot be so."

"He was mortally wounded in a duel this morning," said I.

"And by my husband's hand," interrupted she. "Ay, reveal it all; leave nothing of the dreadful tale untold." As she frantickly uttered these words, she fell from her chair in violent hysterics.

I rang for her attendant, and, from feelings of humanity, waited until the first violence of her emotions had subsided. While she continued sobbing and shrieking, her *femme de chambre* displayed the most extraordinary nonchalance: performing the services that the position of her mistress required, with a *brusquerie*, and an evident want of good feeling, that shocked me. Something in the countenance and whole air of this woman impressed me with a most unfavourable opinion of her, which her conduct towards Mrs. Mortimer served to confirm; and I determined therefore not to leave that unhappy person until she had recovered some degree of consciousness, not wishing to trust either her, or the bank notes, which I had picked up from the carpet, to the tender mercy of her servants.

When Mrs. Mortimer had regained some portion of composure, she dismissed her *femme de chambre* from the room; who left it, with such undisguised impertinence of manner, that I pitied

the fallen and unhappy woman, who was helplessly exposed to this insolence.

"Are you sure, quite sure, that Mr. Vernon cannot recover?" asked Mrs. Mortimer.

"The surgeons have so pronounced," replied I.

"And did Lady Mary know this fact, when she sent the money?"

"Yes; she had been informed that there was no hope."

"Oh, God! oh, God! forgive me!" exclaimed Mrs. Mortimer, bursting into a paroxysm of tears; "and this—this is the woman I have so wronged, I have so tortured!"

I felt myself relent towards her, as I witnessed the deep and salutary impression made on her by Lady Mary's goodness. I spoke kindly to her, and succeeded, though not without much difficulty, in inducing her to retain the bank notes; then, in the hope of affording an additional mitigation to her sorrow, promised to inform her daily of the state of Mr. Vernon.

"Oh, I am wretched and disgraced," sobbed she, while I used my fruitless endeavours to sooth her. "It seems strange and puerile to think of such a contemptible annoyance at this moment, weighed down as I am, by afflictions so appalling; but my maid—she on whom I have literally lavished money and presents—has so grossly insulted me last night, and this morning, that I shrink from encountering, and have not courage to dismiss her."

I promised immediately to take this office on myself, and to get my housekeeper to send her a *femme de chambre*, in a few hours. Her gratitude was extreme, and proved that she had still some good feeling left.

Never did I witness such concentrated rage and malice as in Madame Claudine, for so she was named, when I informed her, in an outer room, that her lady had no longer occasion for her services.

"Not no occasion for my services," replied she, in broken English. "I should be very

sorry to continue dem to her *now*, dat she is *exposée*, and vat you call turn out, from de house of Mons. Mortimer. It was all vary well as long as Monsieur did please to *shut* his eyes, and *open* his purse. But *now*, it is *toute autre chose*, all one oder ting; and so I did tell her, last night, when we vas turn out, *chassée de la maison*, before I have de time to finish my rober de whisk, in the steward's room, or eat one morsel of supper, *malgre* Mons. Pergault de cook have prepare von salade d'Homars *exprés* for me. And den ve comes to dis dismal, damp leetle hole, vidout never no *maitre d'hotel*, nor domestique for to speak to, except de livery servant, vid whom a *femme de chambre de bonne maison*, like to me, cannot change de vords. I vould not be surprise, if Mons. Henri, de valet de Mons. Mortimer, vas to break his vord of honour, and refuse to marry me, for coming off vid von who vill be the cause of having all de establishment sent avay; von vicked voman, who never care for the domestiques, and only tink of herself! She never have told me

her secrets, more be de shame for her, to try to deceive her *femme de chambre*; but she tink to blind my eyes, because she blind Mons. Mortimer's eyes long time. 'But I am not so fool; for ve *femmes des chambres* see de lof affair at von grand distance, before de oder persons tink dere be any lof at all; and den, ve vatch, and vatch, till ve do find out all, and I am glad, because she tink to deceive me. Ve *femmes des chambres* have as much right to de secrets of *notres dames* as to deir clothes, and ven de do keep von, or de oder from us, ve exposé dem."

I was so disgusted with the unblushing vice and effrontery of this vile woman, that I told her to be silent, in a tone so peremptory, as to check her loquacity; and from compassion to her guilty and unfortunate mistress, I remained in the house until she had left it, insuring her departure by a ready compliance with the extravagant, and probably dishonest claims for wages, and sundry articles, alleged to have been purchased for Mrs. Mortimer's use.

I returned immediately to Grosvenor-square; and found that Mr. Vernon seemed so much refreshed by the few hours' repose he had enjoyed, that his physicians thought it probable he might linger for some time. Lady Mary attended him unremittingly; and Lady Delafield told me, with tears in her eyes, that she had never witnessed anything so affecting as the efforts made by both husband and wife, to conceal from each other, the anguish they were enduring. All the passionate tenderness which Mr. Vernon had felt for Lady Mary, during the first months of their union, seemed to revive in its pristine force, now that that union was on the verge of being dissolved by death. His eyes seldom left her face; and hers dwelt on his, with an expression of unutterable love. The thoughts of both were of that fearful separation, which a few days, nay, a few hours, might see accomplished, when the grave would eternally divide them; yet, neither trusted themselves to speak of what ceaselessly occupied the reflections

of both. Grief, the truest, the deepest, alone filled the heart of the wife; for, *she* had perpetrated no crime against affection, either of omission or commission. But, *he* was tortured by remorse, and writhed in agony at the anticipation of that fearful separation, to which his own guilty passions were conducting him. Now that the film had fallen from his eyes, his career during the last few months appeared before him in all its enormity; and the levity of character which had led to his derelictions, having given place to sober reflection, he seemed to awake as if from a frightful dream, only to find himself, while trembling on the verge of eternity, again in view of that happiness he had so ruthlessly cast from his grasp.

It was edifying, it was beautiful, to see Lady Mary watching, with untired and untiring love, through the tedious hours that rolled their course, by the couch of her husband; touchingly reading, with a voice tremulous from suppressed emotion, the sacred volume, to which

we turn in affliction, and never in vain. She lifted his sinking heart from the abyss of despair to a future state; he listened as to the admonitions of an angel, and as this life faded from his view, he would talk to her of the life to come, of which, alas! he had hitherto thought so seldom, when they would be once more united, never to part again.

Grief and anxiety now began to make their ravages felt on the already weakened constitution of Lady Mary. Each revolving day saw her become more pale and attenuated; her fine form lost all its roundness, and a bright red spot on her cheek, told that fever was spreading through her veins. Her aunt, whom I saw daily, made me the confidant of all her fears, and they were of the most sombre cast.

"I see it plainly, my dear Mr. Lyster," would she say, "my poor Mary is fading away every hour, and *he*, would you believe it, seems to regard her altered looks with complacency. Oh! the selfishness of some people! When in health,

he slighted, nay, almost deserted her, for another; and now, I believe, he would literally rejoice were she to die with him. Why, he is as bad as the savage despots, who, when expiring, ordain the deaths of all their wives, favourite slaves, and animals, in order that they may meet their masters in their imaginary future world. It is too bad, much too bad; and me, Mr. Lyster, what is to become of *me*, if I lose her? Who is to watch by *my* sick couch, or to close *my* dying eyes; and *he* the cause of all. Indeed, I can hardly command enough Christian charity to forgive him, even though I know he is on his death-bed."

"His conduct has been most culpable, I admit," replied I, "but I believe he has only been weak, and not wicked."

"Don't try to palliate guilt with such subterfuges, Mr. Lyster," said Lady Delafield. "The difference between weakness and wickedness is much less than people suppose; and the consequences are nearly always the same. Weak men

only want the temptation to become wicked; they can resist no seduction, refuse no enjoyment. They shrink from opposition, as children do from punishment; and guilt ever finds them ready to yield to its *first* assaults. A strong minded man may stoop to temptation, and recover from it; becoming strengthened by the experience he has acquired, as iron gains hardness by the fire that heats it. But a weak man is only rendered weaker by each fall, and, like melted lead, takes any form that any one chooses to give him. Lady Mary," continued the prolix old lady, "has sat up with Mr. Vernon every night; not all my entreaties can induce her to leave him, and it is only during the day that she will consent to repose for an hour or two in the chamber that joins his. While she sleeps, he writes, and writes such gloomy things. Why, it was only this morning that I found her almost suffocated with tears, perusing these lines, which I took away, when she left the room for a moment, seeing how they agitated her. Read

Mr. Lyster, and you will agree with me, that he must be indeed intensely selfish, thus to harrow up her feelings, already too much wounded. He should not have suffered her to see his gloomy production: such conduct, I repeat, is wickedly selfish, and I hate selfish people. *I* never was selfish, Mr. Lyster, never; and yet the reward for my freedom from this besetting sin, will be, to be left to bear up against the infirmities of age *alone*, and to have *my* eyes closed by hireling hands. Oh! it is too bad! much too bad! and I cannot bear selfish people."

Poor old lady! and this energetic profession of disinterestedness to me, while she was in the very act of lamenting the probability of *her* privations in case of the loss of her niece, and only apprehending the miserable catastrophe in reference to *her* personal share in its consequences.

THE DYING HUSBAND TO HIS WIFE

Dearest! I am going
To the dreary grave,
Not thy love, though mighty,
Can avail to save;

Ruthless Death has mark'd me
Soon to be his prey;
All my hours are number'd,
Brief must be my stay.
Yet, beloved! oh, weep not,
Every tear of thine
Turns my soul from heaven,
Making earth its shrine.

Soon, this heart, now beating
Warm with love for thee,
All its throbbings ceasing,
Food for worms shall be:
Soon, this breast, that pillow'd
Thy loved head in sleep,
Shall forget its sighing—
Thou wilt live and weep:
And these eyes fast fading,
Soon shall look their last;
Wilt thou gaze upon me
When their light hath past?

Ah! these lips so faultering,
Silent soon shall be,
Speak no accents tender,
Smile no more on thee:
The ear that loved the music
Of thy voice's tones,
Soon shall be insensate
To thy sighs and moans.
Thou wilt call me vainly,
In loud, bitter grief,
And its sad outpouring
Yield thee no relief.

Yet, thou'lt stay beside me
When life's spark has fled;
Thy fond heart will shrink not
From my dreary bed.
Words of love thou'lt falter,
Ne'er to meet reply,
Nor from corse so pallid
Wilt thou turn thine eye.
One dear kiss but give me,
Ere I pass away,
'Tis the last sad token
Love from thee would pray.

Oh! yet grant *one* other:
Let this ring of thine,
Pledged before the altar
In exchange for mine,
Rest with me, the darkness
Of my grave to share,
Though the worm around it
Kiss thy shining hair.
Hush! a cloud comes o'er me,
Thee no more I see;
'Tis, oh God! our parting—
Blessings rest with thee!

Various were the wishes and hopes that passed through my mind during the lingering illness of Mr. Vernon. There were days when I longed, absolutely longed for his death; because I considered that each hour added to his suffering

existence, abridged one from that of Lady Mary. I pictured to myself that the first vehemence of her grief at his decease being subdued, resignation would follow, and lead to the recovery of her shattered health. *Time*, the healer of even the deepest wounds of grief, would, I fondly imagined, cicatrize, if not totally efface, hers. Fool that I was! I knew not how a woman can love, or mourn; and it was reserved for this pure and lovely creature to instruct me. At other times, when Lady Delafield has recounted to me the despair and anguish of her niece, as her husband's approaching dissolution seemed to draw nearer, I have prayed, fervently prayed, that his life might be prolonged, even though it offered an impassable barrier between her I doted on, and my hopes.

I had now become an *habitué* at Grosvenor Square, where Lady Delafield had taken up her residence. She saw, however, but little of her niece, who never left her husband's chamber but when she sought her couch for an hour's slumber.

I felt an indescribable, though a melancholy, pleasure, in being thus almost an inmate in the house of her I loved. Lady Delafield clung to me with all the helplessness of age. I was the person to be consulted on all emergencies, and in whose patient ear all her griefs were to be poured. Frequently did she acknowledge her obligations to me, and say, that I was necessary to her very existence; that, without me, she could not have borne up against the troubles present and prospective, that menaced her; and that she considered me as one of her family. How has my foolish heart beat with vague hopes, at hearing such words! They engendered the delusive idea, that, at some remote period, when informed by her aunt of my unceasing attentions, I might be permitted, as a friend, to console Lady Mary; and from friendship to love, I fancied the distance not insuparable.

Thus, unworthy as I was, my kindness to her aged relative, the friend of my dear mother, had its source only in selfishness. It was true, that

I hardly dared imagine that I could ever become more than a friend to Lady Mary; but to be even this, would be to be blessed beyond all that I had ever yet experienced, and, as the verse says,

> "None without Hope e'er loved the brightest fair,
> For Love will hope, when Reason would despair."

So hope presented me indistinct, but delicious, visions, never, never to be realized. I loved to sit on the chairs, or recline on the sofa, which had been pressed by her; all the objects in the rooms on which her eyes had ever rested, possessed a charm for me: the very atmosphere of the apartment seemed impregnated with a fragrance that breathed of her; and I was only tranquil when beneath her roof. I have felt abashed and humiliated when Lady Delafield heaped commendations on my domestic habits and sedentary tastes; and, above all, on the disinterested devotion of my time and comfort to *her*.

The good old lady little imagined that I was

the slave to an ungovernable and unhallowed passion, and that all my attentions to her proceeded from selfish motives. She talked incessantly of her niece; a subject on which I could have listened for ever. She related a thousand incidents connected with her infancy and girlhood, all calculated to rivet still more closely the chain that bound me to her. How have I writhed in the pangs of jealousy, when she has dwelt, with prolixity, on the passionate attachment of Lady Mary to her husband; and how have I endeavoured to lead her to revert to the period antecedent to her niece's knowledge of him. On one occasion—I shall never forget it—she observed to me, that she often thought I seemed formed for Lady Mary. "We possessed," she said, "the same love of home and quiet." I felt the blood rush to my very temples. "And yet," continued she, "perhaps you might not have liked each other; for similarity of tastes, does not always beget affection. I remember,

that when I asked Mary, the day after you were presented to me, if she did not think you good looking?" (how my heart throbbed), "She replied that she had not observed you sufficiently to judge."

How did this speech wound me! Never did vanity receive a more severe check. Lady Delafield probably observed my mortification, for she resumed:

"The second time we met you, Mary assented to my remark, that yours was a good countenance."

Then, she *had* remarked me; and my appearance had not displeased her! Here, was subject for joy; and Hope once more spread its wings, and soared into the future.

Mr. Vernon had now lingered on for six weeks, six *blessed* weeks, as his admirable wife called them; for, during that period, she had taught him to look to *another world*, for that happiness promised to the repentant sinner. But the man-

date had gone forth; death was not to be cheated of his prey; and Mr. Vernon expired in the arms of his wife, blessing her with his latest breath.

Prepared, as we considered Lady Mary to be, for this calamity, she soon sank under it; and a few weeks saw her borne to the grave, that so lately received the mortal remains of him she loved so well.

Though years, long years, have elapsed since I saw her deposited in the tomb, my recollection of the appalling spectacle, is at this moment as vivid as though it had occurred but yesterday. What *I* suffered, those only can know, who, having centred all feelings, all hopes, in one passion, behold the object of it snatched for ever from their view. I mourned her long and deeply;—but why dwell on this painful theme? She died, unknowing that she left on earth a heart that would long bleed for her loss; and I had not even the consolation of thinking that she would have pitied the attachment she had inspired.

Shortly after her death, her aunt gave me the following verses, written by Lady Mary, a few days subsequent to the interment of her husband.

THE MOURNER.

I saw thee when Death hover'd nigh,
And set his seal upon thy brow;
I heard thy struggling groan and sigh,
Which e'en in mem'ry haunts me now.

I saw the lips, all pale and chill,
Where words of love were wont to dwell,
And felt a pang my bosom thrill,
That words can never, never tell.

And when the fearful strife was o'er,
When life had fled, and hope was gone,
I gazed on thy dear face once more—
That face which still I gaze upon.

I thought how soon the cold, dark grave
Would hide thee from my tearful eye,
And, frighted, shrank from life, to crave,
In that chill tomb with thee to lie.

I call'd thee by fond names of love,
Names that were wont to charm thine ear;
But nought the ear of Death could move,
And heedless fell each burning tear.

Tears fell in streams upon thy brow,
As my pale lips to thine were press'd;
But, ah! those lava showers had now
No power to break thy marble rest.

Within the coffin's narrow bound
Thy cold remains too soon were laid:
Ah! worse than death, was the harsh sound
The closing of that coffin made.

Why did I live beyond that hour
When "all the life of life is fled?"
Existence, fearful is thy power,
Who lingerest still, when Hope is dead!

When I had perused them, I could not refrain from feeling, that it was better she had not been left to drag on an existence which the loss of him she had so fondly loved, must have for ever embittered: and I ceased to delude myself any longer with the hope, that a heart so devoted as hers had been, could ever have found consolation in a second attachment.

Pity induced me to continue to poor Lady Delafield, the attentions that a selfish motive first led me to pay her. She survived her niece but a year; and, dying, bequeathed to me the por-

trait now before me, which I have preserved with a religious care. When I have since heard some heartless coxcomb, or witless worldling, pronounce women to be incapable of a lasting attachment, I have turned from them with scorn, to think of Lady Mary Vernon; whose love neither neglect, unkindness, nor even death itself could change, and who followed the object of her attachment to the grave from which she could not save him.

MY FOURTH LOVE.

WHAT! (I fancy I hear some indignant fair one say), can he again have loved? and has the pure flame, kindled by the beautiful and sainted Mary, been profaned by some unworthy successor to her place, in his heart?

Alas! it was even so: the grief, I thought indestructible, passed away, like all other things in this sublunary world, fading day by day, until nothing of it was left but a tender melancholy, like the softened feeling that a summer's twilight produces on the mind; or, like the memory of our youth, when that joyous season of life has long departed. Lady Mary was not forgotten. Oh! no; but she was regarded by me as a vision, beautiful, evanescent, and indis-

tinct, something to be recurred to in solitude and in prayer, but too pure, too sacred for this work-o'-day world. In a few months, I blush to say *how few*, I again mingled with the busy crowd; the time-killers, who tremble at death, yet find that the frail and uncertain tenure by which existence is held, passes not rapidly enough, and therefore try to accelerate its speed by all the means in their power. I again frequented my old haunts, the clubs; was a regular equestrian in Hyde Park, and looked in at most of the fashionable routs and balls of the season.

Mothers, aunts, and married sisters, honored me with no small portion of their attention. My fortune was magnified into more than double its actual amount, and I was looked on as that most coveted of all bipeds, a marrying man, a good *parti*, or prize, in the lottery of wedlock, which it behoved all prudent spinsters to endeavour to secure. The lesson I had received from Arabella Wilton, had made a forcible impression on my mind. I was now prone to suspect

that it was my *fortune*, and *not myself*, that attracted the attentions I received; and I turned with disgust from every *unmarried* woman who said a civil thing, or extended a gracious smile to me, viewing her as a designing speculatress, who was thinking only of pin-money, jewels, and all the *et ceteras* that my wealth could furnish. I hardly know which is the most objectionable character of the two, the man whose vanity misleads him into fancying that every woman who bestows upon him a kind word or smile is smitten with him; or he, who suspects that his fortune gives him irresistible claims on the attention of the sex. Vanity is a primitive weakness; but suspicion is a failing acquired by that worldly wisdom, which few ever attained, except at the price of this mean vice.

Having an intuitive fear of the interested motives of *unmarried* women, I sought the society of those, who, if less interested, were not less interesting,—I mean the married. And here, "I could a tale unfold."—But no, let me forbear,

and leave my *bonnes fortunes* to the imagination of my readers.

At this period I was presented to Lady Elmscourt, one of the reigning belles of the day, though as the French would say, *un peu passée.* The time which had elapsed since her diploma of beauty had been conferred upon her seemed to have set upon it the stamp of universal concurrence. Nobody could question the authenticity of charms, acknowledged during twenty years; hence, her reputation for loveliness passed current, long after the attractions that had acquired it, had lost their lustre.

My attention was drawn towards her, at the period to which I am now recurring, not merely by her beauty, though that might have excused the thraldom of wiser heads than mine, but by a certain air of sentiment that pervaded her countenance; and which, if it amounted not quite to melancholy, possessed all the softness and charm, which a gentle pensiveness never fails to lend a handsome woman in the eyes of a man who has

known a disappointment of the heart. Lady Elmscourt, however, was even then arrived at that age, when to guess the precise number of lustres she had numbered, becomes a difficult task; admirers always diminishing one, if not two, and the world in general, and friends in particular, adding an equal number.

She insinuated, or implied, for what well-bred woman ever does more on such subjects, that she was thirty-three. This acknowledgment was made by references to epochs, when she was, as she said, quite a child; or to others, when she first came out. Her cheek had lost none of its bloom, perhaps it had increased, rather than diminished the brightness of its hue; for it wore a certain fixed, though still a fine red, that never appears before maturity has for some years replaced the delicate and evanescent tints which belong only to youth.

Her eyes were as brilliant, but less pellucid than formerly; her hair as glossy, but much less profuse in its wavy tresses; and her rounded

charms approached that dreaded degree of *embonpoint*, which indicates the *motherly* as well as the matronly character. Certain slight lines, so slight as to be almost imperceptible, *around* the eyes, and a protuberance of the skin *beneath* them, furnished the envious with proofs that, as they coarsely remarked, though she had *le chair de poule*, she yet was no chicken. But imposing as was all this evidence, it failed to convince me that she was other than a very beautiful and captivating woman, more especially in a well lighted ball-room, or in the softened shade of her own boudoir. It is only rendering justice to her taste to add, that she seldom allowed the garish sun to shine on her charms, or submitted herself, unveiled, to the dangerous ordeal of broad daylight.

Blessed with an indulgent husband, a large fortune, and uninterrupted good health, what could be the cause of the apparent melancholy of Lady Elmscourt? This question I asked myself more than once; and its solution not

only piqued my curiosity, but excited my interest. A little more discrimination on my part, might have easily led to a discovery of the source of her chagrin. But, I was never remarkable for being quick-sighted to the defects of a handsome woman; and in this precise case was willing to invest with the ennobling halo of sentiment, a peculiarity which originated but in weakness of mind. Lady Elmscourt was mourning over her departed youth, and departing beauty; the gradual desertion of which, few women are philosophical enough to behold with resignation or equanimity. Nor can we blame this regret, when we consider how much *we* foster their vanity; and encourage the culpable notion, that youth and the charms of person are their surest, if not best claims on our attachment.

My acquaintance with Lady Elmscourt had ripened into intimacy; each interview rendering me still more the slave to her waning charms. I looked on them with the same feelings with which we regard the setting sun—a deep ad-

miration for the brilliant, but fading beauty, mingling with melancholy at the recollection, that its loveliness is fleeting away, and will soon be irrevocably lost.

We talked sentiment, that rail-road to the heart; agreed on the insufficiency of the pleasures of a frivolous, or to use what might be called its synonyme, a fashionable life, to fill up "the void left aching in the heart." In all these conversations we were, of course, as incomprehensible and diffuse as sentimentalists usually are; retaining only the impression, that *we* were superior to the herd around us, and that it was this superiority which rendered us unhappy by unfitting us for a contact with them.

Lady Elmscourt talked, as I thought eloquently, of the misery of uncongenial minds, misunderstood feelings, and crushed sympathies. No definite accusation against her liege lord was ever uttered, unless it were in the avowal, and it was made in bitterness of feeling, that he had no taste for amatory poetry; laughed, yes,

positively laughed at Shenstone's charming pastorals; preferred Dryden and Pope, to the exquisite translations of the Persian Hafiz; and had a detestation for French romances. I confess that in my heart I felt a warmer sympathy with the literary taste of the husband, than with that of the wife. But this dissimilarity of sentiment I carefully concealed from her; leaving her, with the usual hypocrisy of my sex, to imagine, that I considered all who could differ with her in opinion, as mere senseless clods of earth, and herself a portion of its fine porcelain, fit only to pass into delicate hands.

She talked of the misfortune of marrying, while yet a child; such, she more than insinuated, had been her fate; and now (and here she looked unutterable things), while *her* heart retained all its freshness, the *lover* of her youth had degenerated into the *husband.* Life had lost all its illusions; and she was—not happy.

When a woman acknowledges to an admirer that she is not happy, there is but one course

left for him to pursue, which is to swear that *he* is miserable, and that he loves madly, hopelessly; taking most artful care that she shall infer from his looks and tones, as well as from his speech, that *she* is the object of this hopeless passion.

Women like to inspire *hopeless* passions; for, even the most mundane of the sweet sex, always retain some portion of the pristine romance of their characters; just as flowers, though withered and faded, still retain some faint remnant of their native perfume.

I had made some progress in a declaration of this kind; exaggerating the admiration I felt for her into a passion, worthy the hero of a French melodrame. During this rhapsody she looked half pleased, half ashamed; just as a woman, who is weak but not vicious, may be supposed to look, when she has by her own folly drawn on herself the insult I was now offering; an insult which every woman authorizes, when she is so unthinking and indelicate, as to repose

a questionable confidence in the breast of a stranger. And here let me warn my female readers, that such confidences are invariably considered as direct advances on their parts.

I was in the midst of my passionate avowal of tenderness, when the door was suddenly opened, and in walked a very good-looking, gentlemanly, middle-aged man, with a most prepossessing countenance. By the by, I have often been struck by the extraordinary disparity of appearance between men of a certain age, and their better halves, who generally look like the elder daughters, or younger sisters of their liege lords, though they are nearly of the same age. The husband presents his bald front, from which the locks that once adorned it, have long receded, growing "fine by degrees, and beautifully less," until only a few lingering locks, of mingled hue, remain; while the wife presents her head, shaded by glossy ringlets, or silken braids, as profuse, nay more so, than when she was indebted for such ornaments to nature, and not to her *coiffeur*.

But to quit this digression, and resume my narrative. Lady Elmscourt seemed for a moment embarrassed; and no wonder, for there is something peculiarly annoying to a well-bred woman, in being interrupted, in the midst of a love scene. Quickly, however, recovering her presence of mind, she presented me to the unconscious intruder on her privacy, who *was* no other than her husband. After the usual civilities, he turned to her, and said:

"I am come, my love, to ask a favour of you. The Duke of Ancaster has lent me his box at Covent Garden for this evening, and I wish to take Emily to the play. I know you dislike going; but will you let me be her *chaperon?*"

"Why, really," replied Lady Elmscourt, "I do not approve of her frequenting theatres—I think the practice of permitting young people to appear at such places, highly reprehensible."

"But, my dear," said her lord, deprecatingly, "Emily is not *quite* so young as all that. Why, let me see, she will be——"

"Oh! pray, say no more," interrupted Lady Elmscourt; "if you have set your heart on taking her, and she desires to go, I cannot refuse my consent; for I hate disappointing young people."

"Why, my dear," rejoined her lord, "to hear you speak, one would imagine Emily to be a child. You forget how old she is; and that, in a short time, she will be——"

"Well, well," again interrupted Lady Elmscourt, preventing him from finishing the sentence, "if you really intend her to go, you had better ring the bell, and have her told to hold herself in readiness."

I took my leave, fancying, as I gave a parting glance to Lady Elmscourt, and marked the expression of discontent which clouded her brow, that she looked at least ten years older than when I entered her boudoir. Vanity whispered that this discontent arose from her mortification at my hearing that she had a daughter who was, as Lord Elmscourt emphatically expressed it, no

longer a child. Still, however flattering might be the cause, its effects on her countenance served to disenchant me exceedingly: we men, being so egregiously selfish, that we are more disposed to find fault with, than to pity, the evils to which we ourselves give rise. I once heard an acquaintance of mine lament that his wife looked extremely ugly, when jealous; never reflecting that *his* conduct exposed her to the passion, and its unembellishing transformation.

When I met Lady Elmscourt at a *soirée*, the evening of the day alluded to, looking as blooming as ever, her dark eyes sparkling with vivacity, and her rich red lips opening with continual smiles, I forgot that I had thought her *un peu passée* in the morning, and became more assiduous than ever. The general admiration she excited among the men, enhanced the power of her attractions in my eyes, and perhaps really increased them; for, a coquettish woman, and *she* certainly was of that genus, always looks more captivating when she sees that she is ad-

mired. Never had Lady Elmscourt been more *fascinating* and *encouraging*—perhaps the words might pass for synonymes—at least, in the vocabulary of a vain man. She smiled on *me*, as I fancied, with peculiar sweetness; but, I dare be sworn, that half a dozen of my contemporary coxcombs entertained the same impression of the smile which she bestowed on *them*.

She asked me where I intended to pass the autumn; a question which, with my usual fatuity, I considered to denote a more than common interest in my movements; consequently, my reply was the expression of a wish, that wherever I might be, I trusted it would be at some place which would admit of my sometimes enjoying the happiness of her society. She looked rather embarrassed at this speech, but *not* displeased; and I began to flatter myself on the easy conquest I had achieved.

"Where do *you* pass the autumn?" asked I, determined to pursue the course our conversation had taken.

"We go to Elmscourt Park in July, and shall be stationary there for some time," replied Lady Elmscourt.

"Is not Elmscourt Park near Alnwick?" demanded I.

"Yes, within a few miles;" was the answer.

"Then, I shall certainly accept an invitation in your neighbourhood, often pressed on me," said I, "and trust I may hope to see you."

I threw into my looks and manner as much meaning as I could, while making this speech; and she appeared, if not pleased, at least not offended, by its freedom. She wore a bouquet of flowers, which furnished me with an opportunity of addressing to her one of the countless silly compliments for which flowers supply the theme; and which are as *fade* as are generally the objects that suggest them. I declared my envy of the position of hers, and my desire to possess them.

"You are really too bad, Mr. Lyster," said she, "and I must not listen to you."

Now, when a lady tells a gentleman that, "he is too bad," he is apt to construe her assertion into a sort of avowal, that he is not bad enough; and, consequently, I was preparing to repeat some of the numberless *platitudes* which fashionable men utter to frivolous women, when she broke from me, in affected alarm, and joined a group who were conversing at a little distance. I followed her, and caught her eyes, which avoided not the encounter of mine; but met and sustained it with an earnest softness which I should be sorry to see my wife, if I had one, exhibit to any man.

When the *soirée* was over, I conducted her to her carriage: her small hand shrank not from the pressure of mine; nay, I thought, but it might be only fancy, that hers returned it, as she placed in it the coveted bouquet. How slight a circumstance can change the whole current of our thoughts and feelings! As her carriage drove away, I raised the flowers to my lips; their odour brought back to memory the

dropped bouquet of the lost, the lovely Lady Mary, and all the sensations which I that evening experienced.

"She," thought I, "would not have *given* me her bouquet. Never could I have presumed to breath an unhallowed vow in *her* chaste ear. *Her* eye would never have met the gaze of mine with answering tenderness. No! no! Mary was a pure, a spotless, as well as a lovely woman!"

And, as these thoughts rushed through my mind, I threw the bouquet from me with disdain; for, its late owner had lost so much by a comparison with the sainted Lady Mary, that her power over my imagination was at an end; and I scorned myself for having yielded to her witchery. If women knew how much of their empire they lose by weak or guilty concessions, policy would supply the place of modesty; and men would not so frequently be furnished with food for the encouragement of dishonourable hopes, and the gratification of inordinate vanity.

A gay supper party at my club, in the society

of some six or eight young *roués*, of fashionable notoriety, dispelled the melancholy which my reminiscences of Lady Mary had excited; and the frequent bumpers of champagne, aided by the libertine compliments lavished by my companions on the personal attractions of Lady Elmscourt, revived my admiration for her. Men are so weak as to be always influenced by the admiration of other men for a woman: and many an embryo passion that might never have been blown into a flame, and many a nearly extinct one, have been rekindled by an accidental commendation of her of whom we have hitherto either thought but slightly, or have ceased to think with pleasure. A sure proof, this, that vanity is, in most cases, the principal fascination in the love affairs of men. Had my passion for Lady Elmscourt been a sincere one, I could not have borne to have listened to the free, the libertine compliments, paid to her person; but, as it was, they gratified my *amour propre*, and piqued me to persevere in my attentions to her.

I commenced my route to her house on the next day, with an unoccupied heart; but with a head filled with the flattering eulogiums which my gay companions had bestowed upon her beauty. *They* thought her a conquest worthy of contesting, and that she evidently encouraged my attentions; consequently, every word or glance of hers, was now remembered "as proof as strong as holy writ," of her *tendresse* for me; and, therefore, *pour passer le temps*, I was willing to devote to her the idle hours that had latterly hung heavy on my hands. To get rid of them, and excite the envy and jealousy of my companions, were desirable objects; objects which generally furnish the chief motives in the *liaisons* which men of fashion form. So, reflection *faite*, as I have said, I bent my course towards Lady Elmscourt's, the next day, at the usual hour.

This interview, after the flirtation of the previous night, must, I felt, lead to a definite understanding between us. I had gone too far to recede; and her encouragement of my advances

had been too decided, to leave her an excuse for repelling me. All this I thought over, without a pulse beating quicker, or one illusion of love warming my heart. I reflected on my position, and its probable results, as calmly as if a *liaison* with a married woman was not a crime, involving the parties in danger, sin, and shame, and laying up sorrow and remorse for the future.

This indifference, perhaps, partially arose from having witnessed the frequency of similar delinquencies in the society in which I lived; and the feeling, or rather the utter want of all feelings, which the man of fashion always habitually exhibits in his *liaisons*.

In passing through Grosvenor Square, my attention was excited by a shriek, if the most harmonious sound of alarm, that ever met my ears, might be called by so unmusical an appellation. I turned, and observed a young female endeavouring to disengage herself from a large Newfoundland dog, that jumped on her with more

animation than violence, he evidently being in play. A matronly looking lady was using her efforts to force the dog away; but he pertinaciously continued to jump on the young lady, to the discomfiture of her robe, as well as of her person. To run to her rescue, and drive her canine admirer away, was the work of a moment; but her large bonnet became untied in the struggle, and fell from her head, leaving exposed to my ardent gaze, one of the loveliest faces I ever beheld. She might have served as a model for a Hebe; youth and health lending all their charms to a countenance, marked by a perfect regularity of features, joined to a matchless complexion. Eyes blue, and, by her alarm, suffused with tears, convinced me, for the first time, of the truth of the old poetical simile, which compared such eyes to "violets bathed in dew;" lips like divided cherries, and cheeks that shamed the rose, with hair of chesnut brown, emulating the tendrils of the vine, in its wavy spiral curls, and the softness and gloss of the

finest silk in its texture, with gently curved brows, and long eye-lashes, of the darkest hue, completed the picture of the lovely creature who stood before me.

I could have gazed on her for ever, but I was recalled to a sense of propriety, by the stern look of the elderly lady; who having coldly thanked me, and arranged the discomposed robe of the young beauty, led her off in another direction.

I stood as if transfixed to the spot, gazing after them, half, ay, more than half, tempted to follow the route they had taken, but checked by the repelling looks of the matron. Who could they be? I would have given hundreds to have discovered; but, as I had left my groom and horses at the top of Brook Street, I had no means of tracing their abode, unless I chose to follow them myself. I was, however, so near the house of Lady Elmscourt, that I decided on entering, determined to ascertain if she knew any of her youthful neighbours, who answered to the description of my beautiful incognita.

She received me with her most winning smiles, yet showing just as much feminine embarrassment, as was requisite to remind me that she had not forgotten my advances of the previous night, and, as I thought, to induce a repetition of them. Nothing forces a man to commit himself so much, as a woman's betraying that she expects him so to do. I entered her house with every thought fixed on another, and totally oblivious of the love speeches I had so recently addressed to her; but, her ostentatious consciousness of her recollection of them, brought them all vividly before me; and, like a fool, I now resumed the same tone of tenderness. 'Twere idle to repeat my *fade* compliments, and protestations of attachment; and her sentimental temporizing, which found expression in some such original and incoherent phrases as the following:—"It was wrong, yes, she knew it was very wrong to listen to me;" an opinion in which I perfectly coincided. "*Friends* we might be, and she hoped we always should be; honour

and virtue did not prohibit this; but more than friends we never could be to each other. She had duties to perform, duties of a wife and a mother; and though she *esteemed* me" (ladies always esteem their admirers), "I must talk to her no more of love."

Her repulses, if such they might be called, were so gentle, as to encourage rather than rebuke me; all that she said being only what every woman, similarly situated, thinks it *convenable* to say on these occasions; occasions that had never occurred, had not their own levity and coquetry induced them; for, no man, who is not a fool, will ever hazard a declaration of love to a married woman, who has not previously given him encouragement. She, however, who has listened to an avowal of illicit passion, even though she rejects it, has sullied the pristine purity of her mind; and never was there more truth than in the line—

"He comes too near, who comes to be denied."

I was pouring forth my asseverations of passion,

when the door flew suddenly open, and my beautiful incognita stood before me, uttering—

"Oh! dear mother, pardon this abruptness, but I was so frightened, and I feared some one might alarm you by telling you of my panic."

At this moment, her eyes fell on my face; and a beautiful blush proved her recognition of me.

"But this gentleman has doubtless informed you of all," continued she, "for *he* it was who rescued me from the dog."

I would willingly have laid down my life for the kind look that accompanied this hurried speech, and the sweet blush that preceded it; for, I was already in love, yes, positively in love with this charming creature, to whose mother, five minutes before, I had been offering my vows. At this moment, Lord Elmscourt entered the *salon*, and having met in the ante room the *dame de compagnie*, who had witnessed the attack of the dog, she related the circumstance to him, attaching more importance to it than it deserved. He embraced his daughter, who

having pointed me out to him as her deliverer, he was vehement in his expressions of thanks.

Lady Elmscourt seemed embarrassed, and not unconscious of my evident admiration of her daughter, near to whose youthful charms hers sank into shade so completely, as to be wholly eclipsed. That she loved her was evident; but that she was anxious to keep her in the back ground, was quite as apparent; and, to an unconcerned spectator, which *I*, however, was not, it would have been an amusing study to have observed, how much of the *mother* was forgotten in the pretensions of the handsome woman, jealous of a rival to her charms, even though that rival was found in her own child.

"You had better retire to your room, my dear Emily," said Lady Elmscourt, "and repose yourself. You are still agitated from your recent alarm."

"She must not, however, depart without thanking her champion," said her father. "Go, my love, and shake hands with Mr. Lyster,"

and he led her towards me, covered with blushes.

She held out a hand—oh! what a hand! small, plump, dimpled, and fair, as ever met the light. Not the dull, dead white, produced by the constant use of almond paste, cold cream, and half a hundred other cosmetics; not that opaque white which marks the generality of fine ladies' hands, and indicates the want of circulation, arising from——idleness. No, hers was so beautifully and delicately tinted with a pale pink, that it looked like the interior of a maiden blush rose. This exquisite little hand fluttered in mine, like a frightened bird in the grasp of a rude school-boy; yet it lingered a moment there too, while she bestowed on me one eloquent glance of gratitude, that spoke more than words; though *they* were not wanting, as, resuming some portion of her native dignity, she gracefully and graciously uttered her thanks. Her father then led her to the door, and I seized my hat, and retreated; dreading to find myself, even for a

moment, alone with the mother, while every pulse of my heart was beating for the daughter.

"I hope, Mr. Lyster," said Lord Elmscourt, "that you have no engagement for to-morrow, and that you will give us the pleasure of seeing you at dinner."

Though I *had* an engagement, I hesitated not to accept his invitation, that I might again behold Lady Emily. I left the house as much in love as if I had never experienced the passion before; and, vain fool that I was, ready as ever to believe, that the object of my passion was already disposed to share it.

Love is, I think, like fever, one severe attack leaves the patient subject to relapses through youth; and each succeeding one renders him more weakened, and, consequently, more exposed to future assaults.

I thought of Emily every hour through the rest of the day, and naturally enough dreamt of her at night. I counted the time with impatience until I could present myself at Grosvenor

Square; and at last ascended the stairs of her father's mansion, agitated by hope and fear, as each of these passions alternately suggested the chances for or against my seeing her. I found Lord Elmscourt in the drawing-room alone, and received a most cordial welcome from him.

"I have been endeavouring," said he, "to prevail on Lady Elmscourt to permit Emily to dine with us to-day, as we have only yourself and two of our country neighbours, who have known her since her birth; but, my efforts have been unavailing. She will, however, join us at dessert, which she always does when we are *en petite committée;*" and he rubbed his hands joyfully, as if in anticipation of the pleasure of seeing her.

He seemed to have an instinctive feeling that I had taken a lively interest in her; and that her presence would have been as agreeable to me as to him. Lady Elmscourt entered the room, attired with even more than usual care; but, in spite of the elegance and studied effort

of her toilette, it struck me that she looked more *fanée* than I had ever observed her to look before. I remarked the strong resemblance between her and her lovely daughter; a resemblance so disadvantageous to her ladyship, that it at once reminded the beholder of that, which she evidently took much pains to make them forget, namely, her age.

The two country neighbours were very similar to the generality of that genus. They ate considerably, and talked eternally of country affairs: of commons to be inclosed, packs of hounds to be given up, and other, to me, equally interesting topics. At last, one of them remarked how exceedingly well her ladyship was looking, "quite as well, indeed, as if she had not a grown daughter to bring out."

This observation occasioned an increase of colour in the cheek of Lady Elmscourt; but, I scarcely need add, the blush contained more of anger than of pleasure. They were continually referring to circumstances that had formerly oc-

curred; reminding Lady Elmscourt, that such, or such, an event, took place about seventeen years ago, just after the period of Lady Emily's birth. Then, one of them perfectly remembered the illumination in the village of Elmscourt at that epoch; while the other quite as vividly recollected, that, at the county ball the year before, he had had the honour of opening the ball with her ladyship.

She was evidently discomposed at their *mal-à-propos* reminiscences; and suffered under the infliction to which her vanity and assumption of juvenility exposed her. But her tormentors seemed totally unconscious that she did not derive as much satisfaction as themselves, from their diverting recollections of the past.

Dinner over, and the dessert placed on the table, Lord Elmscourt desired the groom of the chambers to inform Lady Emily that she was expected in the *salle à manger*. I felt my heart beat quicker at this message, and was conscious that I was exhibiting my discomposure, as I

caught the eye of Lady Elmscourt fixed on me, with, as I thought, a scrutinizing glance.

The servant quickly returned, saying that Lady Emily was not quite well, and had retired to bed. I fancied that I perceived a smile of malicious triumph on Lady Elmscourt's face, as she regarded me, noting, as I dare be sworn she did, an expression of deep disappointment on my countenance. Already a romance was composed in my imagination: Emily, the beauteous Emily, was its heroine, and my unworthy self, its hero. The mother in love with me, and suspicious of her daughter, complicated, and gave interest to, the plot; my beloved and I were to be exposed to all the machinations of jealousy; and this prevention of Lady Emily's presence at the dessert, was the first active step of the drama.

"Did you know that Emily was ill, my dear?" asked the alarmed father. "It is very strange; for I saw her a short time before I descended to the drawing-room, and she appeared in perfec

health. I must really go and see what is the matter with her;" and apologizing to us for his absence, he left the room.

The country neighbours seized that opportunity of discussing the probability of an approaching dissolution of parliament, a probability in *those* days as often anticipated by the persons who desired it, as in *these.*

Lady Elmscourt, in a *sotto voce*, asked me if I did not admire Lady Emily?

The question embarrassed me, for I dared not say *how much* I admired her; and a cold assent would have appeared hypocritical. I was sure that Lady Elmscourt was narrowly examining my countenance during the interrogation; for, though I did not *see* that her eyes were on me, yet I *felt* that they were; and this consciousness added to my confusion.

I was relieved by the entrance of Lord Elmscourt leading in triumph his lovely daughter, her eyes sparkling with animation, and her cheeks blooming with the roses of health; and

the glad smile that played round her lips, I took to be an unequivocal symptom of her pleasure at seeing me. I could not forbear stealing a look at her mother: and though it was but the glance of a moment, I discovered dissatisfaction, nay, more than that merely negative feeling, portrayed on her countenance; at least, such was my uncharitable conclusion.

"Well, for once I have defeated the manœuvres of Mrs. Villiers," said our host, rubbing his hands with an air of great satisfaction. "I was sure Emily was not ill; and equally sure that she was longing to be with us."

Lady Elmscourt positively blushed, an irrefragable proof, as my vanity whispered, that the manœuvre of keeping Lady Emily from us, was hers, and not Mrs. Villiers'.

"Emily, here are your old friends, Sir John Belton and Mr. Thorold; and your new friend, Mr. Lyster. They are each and all glad to see you, I can answer for it: Mr. Lyster especially, if, as I believe, it be true, that we always like those

whom we have served. I am not casuist enough to know whether the *obliged* entertain the same feeling; but, I think too well of my Emily to suspect *her* of ingratitude. So, I take for granted, that she is as glad to see Mr. Lyster, as he evidently is to see her."

I could not resist stealing a look at Lady Emily at this observation, and was vain enough to be delighted at perceiving her cheeks suffused with blushes. Her eyes, too, were cast down with a pretty embarrassment, that lent her new charms, and called forth a remark from the obtuse Mr. Thorold,—"That *he* would lay a wager, there was no ingratitude in Lady Emily's heart towards Mr. Lyster." Having made this acute observation, he chuckled with that peculiar laugh, to which country gentlemen of a certain age, and who rarely quit their own county, are prone.

I pitied the increased embarrassment of the beautiful girl, which this silly speech had occasioned; and her mother, too, seemed to dislike

the tone the conversation had taken; for her lynx eye had detected its effect on me.

"We all expected that Lady Emily would have been presented at court this season," said Sir John Belton; "and Lady Belton and my daughters looked through all the papers to see her name, and the description of her dress."

"I thought young ladies were always presented when they had completed their seventeenth year," interrupted Mr. Thorold, "and Lady Emily entered her eighteenth, in April.

"Ah! Lady Elmscourt, how old our children make us appear; but, 'weeds of grace, grow apace,' as the old verse says. Why, there is my eldest daughter, who is two months younger than Lady Emily, and *she* has been a *wife* these seven months; nay, more, will soon be a *mother*. Fancy *that*, my lady; every dog has his day, as the old saying is. I shall soon be a grandfather; and you, my lady, how will *you* like being a grandmother, eh? And yet all this must happen very soon; for Lady Emily is not one who will be

left long on your hands. Will she, Mr. Lyster? *Apropos*," (he did not say of what), "Lord Belmont is expected home from Italy, in August, is he not?"

The lovely Emily was covered with blushes, but, whether at the mention of marriage in general, or Lord Belmont in particular, I could not discover. Her mother, however, relieved her by rising from table and leaving the room; Lord Elmscourt making no effort to detain them, as he also was embarrassed by the blunt coarseness of his stupid, but well-meaning neighbour. I had a presentiment that Emily would not escape some unkindness from her mother; and this fear, mingled with a vague dread of Lord Belmont and the *apropos*, haunted me during the long hour and a half that elapsed before we were summoned to coffee, in the drawing-room, where Emily was—not.

Lady Elmscourt assumed an air of dignified coldness towards me; for which I respected, and would have thanked her, had I not been per-

suaded that jealousy and dislike had usurped the softer, but more reprehensible feeling, she appeared to have entertained for me the previous day. How did I execrate the folly that urged me to *feign* a passion I never felt. All the enormity of my conduct stood exposed to my view. The immorality of seeking to form a *liaison* with a married woman, now, for the first time, appeared to me in its true colours, ineffably wicked and sinful; and I became shocked at my past conduct. All this renovation of my slumbering morality, and for which I was so ready to give myself credit, arose not from sober conviction of wrong, but from selfishness alone. It had sprung into life in a few hours, engendered by the captivation of Lady Emily; and I at present, consequently, considered her mother's former encouragement of my attentions, highly culpable. How severely I judged *her now*, who, only two days before, I professed to love, and really did admire!

Such is man; ever selfish, ever solely regard-

ful of his own gratification; glossing over the crimes that administer to his pleasures, and condemning them with unmitigated severity when they have ceased to be desirable.

I had such a conviction of Lady Elmscourt's lingering *tendresse* for me, that to continue my accustomed visits to her would be, impossible; for, they must have led to an explanation of my altered sentiments, painful to me, and humiliating to her. To have assumed the manner of a mere acquaintance, after the impassioned vows I had made her, must have excited her anger; and to have persevered in even the semblance of attachment to her, I felt to be literally impracticable. Nothing remained for me, therefore, but to absent myself from her house; only calling occasionally, when I knew she was not at home, in order that the sudden cessation of my visits might not give room for observations.

I sauntered through Grosvenor Square frequently, in the hope of meeting Lady Emily; but, alas! in vain:—she never appeared. At

length, I began to despair of seeing her again, when, one fine morning, wishing to try a horse I was about to purchase, I rode into Hyde Park, at, for me, an unusually early hour; and while galloping up Constitution Hill, encountered Lady Emily and her father, on horseback. The good Earl made me many friendly reproaches for having absented myself from Grosvenor Square; and Emily looked down and blushed, while answering my inquiries about her health.

How exquisitely lovely she appeared! her riding habit displaying the perfect symmetry of her form, and the breeze agitating the beautiful ringlets, which at one moment shaded her delicate cheeks, and the next floated on the air. Though a timid rider, she looked most gracefully on horseback; and I gazed on her with a delight, the demonstrations of which I felt it difficult to repress.

"Emily only commenced riding the day before yesterday," said her father, in answer to

some remark of mine—" I thought she looked pale of late, for want of exercise."

My heart beat quicker at this intelligence. Yes, it must be so; her paleness was connected with my absence; and, vain blockhead that I was! I set this down in my mind as a certain proof that I had already made a deep impression on her youthful heart.

" Ever since the day you rescued her from her canine admirer," resumed Lord Elmscourt, " my wife has not permitted her to walk in the square, lest a similar accident might occur. There is nothing, after all, Mr. Lyster, like a mother's love; and Emily's mother is always uneasy when she is out of her sight."

Poor, good-natured man, thought I; little does he imagine the *real* motive of this anxiety, which I penetrated at once, and, with my usual sagacity, set down to Lady Elmscourt's jealousy. Such quick perception does vanity bestow on its slaves! One of the almost numberless advantages

of goodness is, that it blinds its possessor to many of those faults in others which could not fail to be detected by the morally defective. A consciousness of unworthiness renders people extremely quick-sighted in discerning the vices of their neighbours; as persons can easily discover in others the symptoms of those diseases beneath which they themselves have suffered. This freedom from suspicion, which is one of the attributes of virtue, "is its own exceeding great reward;" and constituted in Lord Elmscourt a source of perpetual content, which the knowledge that grows of the tree of evil, might have for ever destroyed.

"Lady Elmscourt," continued he, "will only permit Emily to ride before breakfast, as she dreads her being exposed to the encounter of all the bold equestrians who frequent the Park at a more fashionable hour; consequently, we finish our ride ere you fine gentlemen are thinking of commencing your day."

An elderly acquaintance now joined Lord

Elmscourt; and this accession to our party gave me an opportunity of conversing with his beautiful daughter. To the bashful timidity of a child, arising from the seclusion in which she had been immured, she joined the good sense and refinement of a highly cultivated young woman; and this rare mixture of infantine bashfulness and maidenly dignity, added new lustre to her charms. If I loved her before hearing the justness of her remarks, or being acquainted with the propriety and delicacy of her sentiments, of which every word she uttered gave proof, how was my passion increased on discovering the superiority of her mind, and the fascination of her manners.

But even these feelings, highly wrought as they were, were enhanced by the belief that she entertained for me a more than common interest; a belief that can render a woman, of even *mediocre* pretensions, attractive in the eyes of all men.

I rode with them until we arrived at the door of her father's mansion, and joyfully accepted

an invitation to dine with them, at an early hour on the following day, and afterwards accompany them to the theatre.

"Can you make up your mind to sit out play and farce?" asked Lord Elmscourt; "for Emily likes to see all the performances. We shall only be three in the box, for Lady Elmscourt rarely enters a theatre; so, unless you are a regular play-going person, you will probably be bored by our long evening there."

The next morning found me galloping round the Park, true as a needle to the pole; but the magnet that attracted me was not there; and, again, I immediately accounted for her absence, by attributing it to the jealousy of her mother.

Punctual as lovers used to be forty years ago, I was at Grosvenor Square at the appointed hour. Lady Elmscourt received me with cold politeness; her lord, with friendly warmth; and Lady Emily, with blushing kindness. I ventured to ask whether the latter had pursued her equestrian exercise in the morning; and de-

tected, in the opposite mirror, a smile, which seemed to me pregnant with malice, on the features of Lady Elmscourt; while her lord replied,

"Oh! no, there is an end to our rides while we stay in London; for Lady Elmscourt has taken to early rising, and drives out into the country with Emily, in an open carriage, before breakfast."

"So, here," thought I, "is convincing proof of the justice of my suspicions!" And a feeling of anger was kindled in my breast at finding that the jealousy of the coquettish mother would preclude me from any opportunity of seeing her charming daughter. At the theatre, at least, however, I shall certainly have the pleasure of conversing with her, untrammeled by the presence of this female Argus, whispered Hope. Judge, then, of my annoyance, gentle reader, when it was announced that this object of all my apprehensions, this destroyer of all my fondest desires and plans, intended to form one of the party. I am sure, my countenance betrayed my

feelings to the wily mother. I wished her—I will not say where—anywhere, however, rather than in our presence, an ever vigilant and malicious spy on every word and look of mine.

At the theatre, Lady Elmscourt manœuvred so skilfully, that she placed herself between her daughter and me, so that I could neither look at, nor speak to her, without exposing myself to the observation of mamma. I sat in perfect purgatory; longing, yet not daring, to interchange a word with the lovely girl, who evidently seemed to observe the alteration in my manner from what it had been the day before. How I hated, yes, positively hated, Lady Elmscourt, for thus thwarting my wishes; and yet, this was the very woman in whose ear, only a few days before, I had breathed vows of love! Such was my selfishness, that, though believing her still to entertain more than a strong predilection for me, I pitied not the mortification which my conduct was so calculated to inflict on her. I thought not of *her* feelings, I thought

only of my own; nor blushed at my all-engrossing egotism.

Having heard Lord Elmscourt make an allusion to the portraits of his wife and daughter, just finishing by a celebrated artist of that day, I called, on the following morning, at the studio of the painter, and saw two of the most faultless resemblances I ever beheld. Having praised them highly, as works of art, I with much difficulty persuaded the artist to make me copies of both. Heaven knows, I now felt little desire to possess that of Lady Elmscourt! though ten days before, I should have considered it a most desirable acquisition; but, to prevent the suspicions of the artist, I professed an equal desire to acquire both. Thus it was that the miniatures now before me became mine.

Lord Elmscourt had taken quite a fancy to me. We never met in the street—for I dared not do more than occasionally leave my card at his door—that he did not reproach me for the unfrequency of my visits, and invite me to dine

with him. His invitations I had not self-command enough to decline, as I was sure of seeing Lady Emily at the dessert; who, as I have before stated, invariably made her appearance with the fruit and flowers, whose freshness she rivalled. The ceremonious civility, but marked coldness of Lady Elmscourt, rendered, however, a seat at her table peculiarly disagreeable; particularly to a person who felt that he deserved her bad opinion. But, what would I not have endured to have the happiness of seeing her lovely daughter! on whom I doted with a passion, such as youth and beauty like hers, alone could have inspired. Nor was I without hope that *she* felt a decided preference for me; for when did the vanity of man fail to whisper hope on such occasions. All the blushing timidity arising from youthful inexperience, and the utter seclusion in which she had been brought up, I considered as incontestible proof of an incipient passion for me, which it only required time and opportunity to cultivate into a strong attachment. If, there-

fore, I ever experienced a dread of not winning this charming creature, it arose in no doubt of *her* willingness to be mine, but in a fear that her mother would never consent to our union.

My hopes of happiness were raised almost to certainty, when Lord Elmscourt gave me a pressing invitation to visit them in the autumn, in the country. This I looked on as a decided proof of encouragement of my attentions to his daughter. I accepted it with joyful anticipations, and longed for the moment that was to see me domiciled beneath the same roof with Lady Emily. I had now become accustomed to the cold ceremoniousness of the mistress of the mansion; and could hardly be said to enjoy existence out of the presence of her lovely daughter.

As the season drew to its close, Lord Elmscourt and his family departed for their seat in Northumberland. I found it difficult to support this short separation from my soul's idol, and counted the hours until I was to rejoin her. The day before that fixed for my departure for

Elmscourt Park, my horse in cantering over the pavement placed his foot on a loose stone, and came to the ground with such force as to cause me to sprain an ankle, and dislocate my wrist. Never did accident occur so inopportunely, and never was one borne with so little patience!

My anxiety and ill-humour, I am persuaded, considerably retarded my recovery; but, at the end of five intolerably tedious weeks, I set out for Northumberland. On arriving at Elmscourt Park, my joy at the prospect of again beholding Lady Emily was indescribable. I fancied myself not only a lover, but almost an accepted one; for the kind letter written to me by Lord Elmscourt to renew his invitation, contained a passage that confirmed my vain hopes.

"Pray come to us as soon as you are able," wrote the good-natured earl; "we are to have some very dear friends here soon, with whom I am anxious to make you acquainted."

What could this mean, but that I was to be presented to those dear friends as the suitor of

his daughter. Yes, it must be so; and my spirits rose in proportion to the expectations this paragraph excited.

The family had retired to dress for dinner when I arrived, so that my first meeting with them was in the library; where I found half a dozen guests assembled, and Lady Emily looking more lovely than ever. Dolt and idiot that I was, I fancied that in the evident pleasure she evinced in welcoming me to her natal home, there was mingled an embarrassment in her manner, that could only arise from a conscious preference for me.

I was presented to the Marquess of Ambleside, and his son the Earl of Belmont, the most strikingly handsome young man I had ever seen; and had I not been assured by my vanity, that Lady Emily's reception of me forbade my entertaining a doubt of her partiality, I should have been alarmed by the presence of one who might have proved so dangerous a rival.

Lady Elmscourt seemed to have quite reco-

vered her former amiability of manner; and was looking so young and handsome, that even near her daughter she must have been admired by the most fastidious connoisseur in beauty.

When dinner was announced, the Marquess of Ambleside conducted our hostess to the *salle à manger*. I waited, expecting to see Lord Belmont offer his arm to Lady Emily; but, to my surprise, as well as delight, her father seized my hand, and desired *me* to lead her to dinner. *This* I considered as an open acknowledgment of my position as an accredited suitor; and I looked with something of triumph towards Lord Belmont, expecting to see him overwhelmed with mortification. But, no symptom of any such feeling appeared; and I wondered at his insensibility, where such a prize as Lady Emily was in question.

Seated next to this lovely creature, and now considering myself in the light of an acknowledged lover, I devoted the whole of my attention to her during dinner. I was in the highest

possible spirits, and my gaiety seemed contagious, as all the party partook in it. I saw, or fancied I saw, a malicious smile on the countenance of Lady Elmscourt, as she observed the animation and self-complacency of my manner; and, what a little piqued me, occasionally detected looks of intelligence interchanged by Lady Emily and Lord Belmont, indicative of the existence of a more familiar intercourse between them, than I wished my future bride to have with any man save me.

While I was meditating on the decorum, if not prudery, which I should exact from my fair neighbour when I should have a *right* to dictate to her, I was thunderstruck by hearing the Marquess of Ambleside, in a voice too clear and distinct to admit of a doubt of its correctness, ask Lady Belmont to drink wine with him. I gazed around to discover whether there was not some mistake, or to ascertain to whom this civility was addressed; but, to my utter horror and dismay, saw his lordship's cold formal eyes fixed on

Lady Emily, who quietly assented to his proposal, totally unconscious of my state of mind!

I felt the blood recede from my heart, and mount to my temples. I feared I should fall from my chair, so sudden and overpowering was the shock I had received. But a glass of water revived me, and prevented any exhibition of what was passing in my breast.

"Mr. Lyster, permit me to have the pleasure of drinking wine with you," said Lord Belmont; "I know I am your debtor for having rescued Lady Belmont from the boisterous attentions of a dog. Emily wrote me a full account of the affair; and did ample justice, I assure you, to the prowess of her *preux chevalier*, on the occasion."

How like a fool I felt at this moment! nor did the arch glance, shot from the bright eyes of Lady Elmscourt, assist to re-assure me.

When the ladies had left the room, and we had drawn our chairs socially together, Lord Elmscourt asked me if I was not surprised when I received his letter, announcing the marriage

of his daughter, which had been celebrated a week before. This letter I missed, by having left London the day it must have arrived there.

"The marriage was arranged two years ago," said Lord Elmscourt, "when the young people fell in love. We old folk thought them too young to be married; an opinion to which Belmont was by no means disposed to assent. As, however, we were obstinate, he was obliged to submit; and took the opportunity of his probation to make a long tour on the Continent. He exacted a promise that Emily should not be presented at court, or go into society, until his return; a promise that her mother, as you may remember, rigidly enforced. Belmont only returned to claim his bride three weeks ago; and a happier pair it would be impossible to find."

Never did a man feel more wretched, or look more like a fool, than I did, through this interminable evening! A thousand nameless little acts of tenderness were mutually exhibited by the bride and bridegroom; and on such occa-

sions Lady Elmscourt looked at me with a smile, which seemed to say—Behold, vain fool, the proof of the error into which your egregious vanity has led you.

The next day Sir John Belton arrived, to spend a short time at Elmscourt Park, when he renewed his acquaintance with me, with that cordiality common to the now nearly extinct race of country squires. Talking of our host and the family, he observed—

"They are capital people; I know few such; and *now*, that my lady is nearly cured of the only fault she ever had—"

"And what may that be?" interrupted I, expecting to hear something not creditable to her reputation.

"Why, Lord bless you, have you not found it out? I thought you Londoners had been sharper. Well, then, if the truth must be told, my lady's only fault was a desire to remain, or at least to be *considered*, young, and to be admired. This led her to be rather too civil to

every coxcomb who fancied himself her admirer, and obtained the reputation of a coquette for a woman who, in fact, never had an evil intention. A more affectionate wife or mother does not exist; though she was addicted to sentimentality, and to a love of exciting admiration."

I felt the blush of shame rise to my brow, at finding how totally duped I had been by my vanity.

All the romance I had created in my imagination, of a jealous mother and a persecuted daughter, enamoured of *me*, fell to the ground. Neither of them had ever possessed one particle of affection for me; the *first* only encouraging my attentions, out of love for admiration; and the second, only blushing and smiling, because blushes and smiles were as natural to her, as perfume is to the rose.

Thus ended my fifth passion; and I left Elmscourt Park, a disappointed, a humiliated, but whether or not a corrected man, the future will disclose.

MY SIXTH LOVE.

THE lesson my vanity received at Elmscourt Park, rendered me cautious of again exposing myself to similar punishment. Well and wisely has it been said, that love soon dies when deprived of the nourishment of hope; but no writer has touched on the velocity with which the winged archer-boy sickens, when vanity has been wounded, nor how rapidly he ceases to remember a flame connected with associations mortifying to his *amour propre*. I hated to think that Lady Elmscourt was merely a weak, vain coquette, encouraging my admiration for the gratification of her vanity; repulsing my attentions more gently than they deserved to be repulsed, when they became too explicit for even her lax notions

of propriety; and not caring two straws about me individually.

Yes, I hated to think her merely a vain coquette, instead of a wicked woman, attached to me by an unholy passion, jealous of her own daughter, and manœuvring to prevent my winning that daughter. To remember her was mortifying, and therefore I soon banished her from my mind. The Lady Emily quickly shared the same exile from my memory; for, how could I bear to recollect that the downcast looks, rosy blushes, and sweet embarrassment, I had so often marked with such self-complacency, were constitutional accessories to her beauty, and had not the slightest reference to me; nay, that while I dreamt my presence caused them, she was thinking only of another, and that other her betrothed husband.

I plunged into every gaiety which presented itself, to endeavour to mitigate the sense of humiliation which rankled in my mind. From this period I became more suspicious than ever

of female attentions; turned with distaste from any approach to the sentimental in conversation; grew almost angry if a young lady cast down her eyes, or blushed, in my presence; though, fortunately for my equanimity of temper, blushes were, even then, as seldom seen in good company, as now.

Chance took me to Cheltenham, which was, at that period, a very different place to the luxurious town it is to-day. While sauntering through the street, I there met an old gentleman whom I had occasionally encountered at the houses of several of our mutual friends; and we renewed our acquaintance with somewhat of that cordiality which Englishmen rarely experience; or, at least, rarely demonstrate, except when they come into contact in places with which they are not familiar.

He asked me to dine with him the next day; and I discovered we were inmates in the same caravanserai. On returning to mine inn, having left Sir Thomas Villiers, my old acquaintance,

in the news room, I encountered on the stairs two *ladies*, who were descending. I drew aside to make room for them, taking off my hat at the same time; a politeness which they acknowledged by slight courtesies, though they passed me instantly. I saw that one of them was extremely handsome, and the other tolerably good looking.

I retired to my chamber early that night, and, while undressing, heard female voices in the next room; which being divided from mine by a slight moveable panneled partition only, allowed me to hear every word of the following dialogue:—

"No, you may say what you will, Eliza, but you cannot persuade me that it can be agreeable to marry a man old enough to be my father, who wears creaking boots, and a horrible wig. The very thought of it makes me ill."

"But, really, Miss Villiers——"

"Pray, don't Miss Villiers me. Dear Eliza, call me Caroline, Cary, as papa does; any thing but Miss, it is so formal."

"Well, then, dear Caroline, surely Sir Henry Moreton is not so *very* old; and he really is *still* a handsome man."

"Why, the very words you use, Eliza, prove he is no fit husband for me. Not so *very* old—humph! and *still* a handsome man. Why may not I, a passable looking girl, (though I say it myself, who ought not to say it), with, heaven knows, how many thousands to my fortune, find a husband (and I am in no such hurry, either) who is only half a dozen years older than myself? a disparity of years which would make him of the mature age of twenty-four, and neither too *young* to look after a wife, nor too *old* to have a sympathy in her pleasures."

"But, perhaps he might not possess the large fortune of Sir Henry—his fine seat in the country, his grand mansion in town."

"Pooh, pooh! a fig for each, and all. How provoking it is of you, Eliza, not to remember that, having these *agreméns* of my own already, by marrying Sir Henry, I only acquire *duplicates*

of them; and who values duplicates?—incumbrances of which people always wish to get rid. If I dislike my husband, shall I be less miserable in a fine house than in a poor one? Will his large fortune buy happiness? No, no; the creaking shoes and the odious wig, would be as unbearable, nay, perhaps more so, encompassed by luxuries, than if I were compelled to pore upon them in some humble abode, where poverty might blunt fastidiousness."

"But, as your papa has set his heart on the match——"

"And as my papa's daughter has set her heart *against* the match, what is to be done? I know papa only marries me to Sir Henry, to secure some one to play chess with him every night. Oh! you may laugh, but, it is true nevertheless."

"Why, how can you, dear Caroline, suspect so good a father as yours, of being so selfish as to sacrifice his only child for his own gratification?"

"But *he* does not see any sacrifice in the

affair. My father has outlived even the memory of youthful feelings, and therefore has no sympathy with them. He thinks that riches and chess form the happiness of life, because they form his; and, consequently, that he is securing mine, in giving my hand to Sir Henry. When I have spoken to him on this subject, he has only shaken his head and exclaimed, 'Ah! Cary, you are a little fool, you know not what is for your good; when you are as old as I am, you will think as I do.' 'But, sir,' I have replied, 'before that period arrives, a great many years must elapse; and before the love of riches and chess comes, one has occasion for some other'— 'Love, you would say,' he has rejoined, filling up the pause in my sentence; 'No, no, Cary, love is all moonshine and stuff, never stands a year's wear and tear. But money and chess are the *summa bona* of life; one never gets tired of *them*.' And thus, probably, ends the conversation, of which this is a specimen. How, therefore, reason with papa, when he is sure to

repeat over and over again, the same argument? Besides, whenever I have said something peculiarly incontrovertible, he grows angry, tells me not to be undutiful, and again very politely assures me that, I am a little fool."

"I am certain, dear Caroline, that he loves you too well, to persist in forcing you into this marriage, as soon as he shall have discovered how exceedingly averse to it you are."

"And I am certain, Eliza, that he loves his own enjoyments too well, *not* to persist; convinced as he is, that this marriage will secure them. He loves me just enough to desire to retain me always near him; and loves chess so inordinately, as to desire to retain Sir Henry Moreton (who affords him a victory every night) perpetually with him. This hopeful marriage accomplishes both these desirable ends; and, consequently, be assured, he will never consent to its being broken off. Heigh ho! what a wretched prospect! Now, if Sir Henry was like that handsome, gentlemanly man we met on

the stairs to-day—I wonder who he can be? Did you observe what beautiful hair he displayed when he took off his hat? *He* wore no wig, I can answer for it; and *his* boots did *not* creak."

I had been hitherto amused, rather than interested, by the dialogue, to which I could not avoid being a listener. But, at the mention of the "handsome, gentlemanly man," my attention became rivetted; and I instantly began to take a lively interest in the speaker, who had so denominated me; for, *me* I was positive it must be. I immediately set down in my own mind that Caroline must be the lovely girl I had seen on the stairs, and Eliza, her companion; and, for once, I was not wrong in my conjectures.

What a pretty name is Caroline," thought I; "and how I should like to be privileged to abridge it into Cary. She who bears it is vivacious and clever. How *naïve* were her observations on her father, and how just on other points. She is a charming person!"

And here, reader, for the *sixth* time, my heart became touched, ay, sensibly touched; and the wily god, Love, for the nonce, found an entrance to it, by the ears. Man! man! wilt thou never be wise? Only two minutes before the mention of "the handsome, gentlemanly man," I had set down Caroline as a pert, flippant, self-conceited girl; but *now*, she appeared a prodigy of talent and vivacity, and I longed, ardently longed, to make her acquaintance.

The voices in the next room died away by degrees, into monosyllables, ending in a kind good night. Then I, too, sought my pillow; my self-complacency increased, to dream of the charming Caroline, who had administered this soothing opiate.

I passed up and down stairs next day much more frequently than my *sorties* from the house required; but, I met not her who occupied all my thoughts. The day appeared unusually long, and I looked forward with dread to a dull, drowsy *tête-à-tête* dinner with Sir Thomas Vil-

liers. But, imagine my surprise, my joyful surprise, when, on entering his apartment, I discovered the two ladies I had seen the day before on the stairs, who were introduced to me as Miss Villiers, his daughter, and her friend, Miss Percy. Not a single blush, or the slightest symptom of embarrassment, marked Miss Villiers's recognition of me, as she gracefully courtesied in return to my respectful salutation.

"How strange," thought I, "that the introduction to 'the handsome, gentlemanly looking man,' produces so little effect on her. But, she is too clever, I suppose, to be always blushing, like Lady Emily; and yet I should have liked to have seen a little consciousness in her manner."

Nothing could be more agreeable than the dinner, thanks to the animation and *naïve* remarks of Miss Villiers; for her friend was a well-bred, but rather taciturn, person, more given to enact a listener than a talker; and Sir Thomas's conversation had no merit save that

of serving as a foil to the wit of his lovely daughter. Miss Villiers was singularly beautiful; a beauty that consisted even more in expression than in features, though hers were nearly faultless. Her eyes were of dark blue; and might have been considered too dazzling, from their constant flashing (no other word can I find to convey their beaming vivacity), had they not been shaded by lashes whose length and jetty hue softened their lustre. Her nose was neither Roman nor Grecian, but, according to my taste, much prettier than either of those classical models; it was what the French call *mignon*, and *un peu retroussé*. Her mouth was small, with full red lips, as like Suckling's description of those of his mistress, as if it had been written for them; and her teeth, those indispensable requisites to beauty, were matchless.

The only fault a hypercritical connoisseur in loveliness could have detected in this charming face, was, that the cheek bones were rather too high and prominent, hinting that their owner had

either Irish or Scots blood in her veins. But even this peculiarity added to the piquancy of her countenance. Her hair was of the darkest shade of brown, and her complexion of the most brilliant and healthful tint. Never did I behold a face so captivating, nor so lavishly endowed with an endless variety of expression! Now sparkling with archness, and in the following moment softly beaming with all the touching innocence and amiability of a gentle child. But, if a fault might have been discovered in her face, the most fastidious critic would have vainly looked for one in her figure, which was symmetry itself. Slight, yet beautifully round, every movement betrayed some new grace; and her hands and feet (those infallible indications of high birth), were of such exquisite proportions that they would have redeemed almost any personal defect, had such existed.

I know not whether my female readers are aware of the high place we men accord to delicately formed hands and feet, among the in-

dispensable requisites to beauty; but few, if any men, can be found who will not admit, that no other charms can compensate for the want of them.

To return, however, to the brilliant, the beautiful Caroline, whose fairy feet and hands led to this digression; there she sat, wielding, like an enchantress, her power over us all. Her father tried to oppose the shield of his dull common-places to the shafts of her playful wit, but, as I need scarcely add, was foiled in the effort; while Miss Percy and I yielded without a struggle to her fascination.

"Do you play chess, Mr. Lyster?" asked Sir Thomas. I replied in the negative, which drew forth a heavy sigh from him, and an ejaculation expressive of his impatience for the arrival of Sir Henry Moreton. Miss Villiers pouted her beautiful lips, and exchanged significant glances with Miss Percy.

"I am quite at your service, sir," said the latter, moving towards the table on which the

chess board stood; while the poor girl's face wore an expression of resignation worthy of a martyr.

"Well, well, Eliza, you are better than not having a partner at all," growled the baronet; "though you do play so confoundedly ill, that there is no pleasure in conquering you. Now, Sir Henry Moreton is a first-rate player, ay, a very first-rate player; and it requires the exertion of all my skill and science to gain a victory over him, night after night, as I do."

"How very odd it is," said Caroline, saucily, "that Lord Montagu, who is considered so good a chess player, declared that *he* thought Sir Henry a very mediocre performer."

"I should like to have heard his lordship assert this," retorted the angry father; "for I should soon have proved to him the contrary. A very mediocre player, indeed! Why, how can that be, when *I*, who have been playing chess these forty years, and practice makes perfect, they say, must play my best, ay, my very best, to

conquer him? Never repeat such nonsense to me, Cary. I thought Lord Montagu had been a sensible man; but, *now*, I have a very poor opinion of him. Go to the pianaforte, and sing me one of my favourite songs to compose me; for you have really ruffled my temper by repeating to me Lord Montagu's silly, superficial judgment."

Never did a voice more perfectly harmonize with a face, than did that of Caroline with hers. She sang admirably, and, what few women do, lost no portion of her beauty while singing. No ungraceful distortion of the features; no affected turnings up of the eyes, marred her fair countenance; whose varied, but natural expression, eloquently evinced her sympathy with the sentiments of her song. When she had finished, Sir Thomas appealed to me, if Cary did not sing very well? a question, in replying to which, I committed no outrage to the most scrupulous veracity in giving an unqualified affirmative.

"Ay, ay, she owes that to me, entirely to me;

I prevented her screaming, like a pea-hen, and opening her mouth to the extremity of her ears, as the Ladies Mellicent do; or turning up her eyes, in imitation of a duck in thunder, like the Misses Weston, whose singing is so much admired. 'Cary,' said I, 'I won't have *my* eyes offended, while my ears are pleased.'—Didn't I, Cary?—And so, you see, if she sings well, she owes it all to me.—Why, bless me, Miss Percy, what *can* you be thinking of? Dear me, dear me, you are enough to make a parson swear. Oh! how I wish Sir Henry Moreton were come! I never shall have a comfortable game until he does."

The evening passed away delightfully, notwithstanding the occasional grumbles and regrets of the baronet; and I left him at eleven o'clock, (the hour at which parties *now* assemble, being *then* that which was fixed for their termination), more in love than I thought it possible I ever should be again, and, perhaps, as much so as I had ever been before; though the present passion partook not of the elevated character

which marked and dignified my attachment to Lady Mary Vernon.

I anticipated with impatience the hearing myself again talked over, in her chamber, by the lovely Caroline. What would she say? had "the handsome gentlemanly man, with the beautiful hair," improved on acquaintance in her opinion? I longed to know; and again forgot the impropriety of seeking to become a listener, in my anxiety to learn her sentiments. As I was approaching the door of the sleeping room I had occupied the night before, I was met by the courtesying chamber maid, who told me that some company having departed, she had prepared a much better room for me at the other end of the house, to which all my things had been removed.

"And why did you do so without my orders," said I, with much more acerbity, than gallantry ought to have permitted me to have used to one of the softer sex.

"I beg your pardon, sir; I'm sure I'm very

sorry, sir, but mistress said you objected to that room, the day as you comed; and that she promised you this here the minute it was empty; so now, sir, all your things are there."

"Have them removed back again directly," said I, angrily: though I perfectly remembered having found fault with the apartment the day of my arrival, and the landlady's having promised me another.

"I'm sure, sir, I'm very sorry, but Miss Villiers' maid has got the room now, on purpose to be near her young missus; and all the bandboxes and himperials belonging to the ladies are now *there;* so, sir, its impossible to move your things back."

I assented to the truth of this representation with a very bad grace, and took possession of my new and comfortable chamber; deeply mortified with the change, which deprived me of hearing what the beautiful Caroline thought of me now that we were acquainted.

I saw her every day, and each day became

more fascinated. Whether, however, her father perceived that I was smitten, or dreaded I should become so, I know not; but he soon took an opportunity of informing me, that he was in daily expectation of the arrival of Sir Henry Moreton, who was shortly to be married to his daughter.

Though I was prepared for this intelligence, the confirmation of it from his own lips gave me pain; for I had indulged hopes that the marriage was not irrevocably fixed. To leave the lovely Caroline a victim to a man she disliked, a man old enough to be her father, and with creaking boots, and a wig? "No! forbid it gallantry, forbid it love!" exclaimed I to myself, as I mentally determined to make her the offer of my heart and hand, and prove that "the handsome gentlemanly man" was not ungrateful.

But, alas! the tide of true love never did run smooth; while I was anticipating her bashful hearing of my suit, which was to be pleaded the very first opportunity, and her approval yielded

with coy yet sweet delay, Sir Henry Moreton arrived; a week at least before he was expected, and to see her alone now became impossible. Sir Thomas Villiers prevented my usual evening visit, the day that his future son-in-law arrived, by telling me they had business to arrange, marriage settlements to look over, &c. &c.; but the next day he hoped that I would dine with him.

I spent a solitary evening, miserable at the thought of what the charming Caroline was undergoing; for, independent of her original girlish dislike to the creaking shoes and wig, I was morally certain she had now to contend with an affection for "the handsome, gentlemanly man;" whose attentions must have completed the conquest which his appearance had awakened. Yes, if she wished, and I had heard the soft wish flow from her rosy lips, that Sir Henry Moreton resembled me, then surely my attentions, which had been unremitting ever since the hour I was presented to her, must have won her affections. I was miserable, and

I felt *she* must be miserable also; for, never would *her* young and sensitive heart lose the impression I had made on it. Of the enduring character of my *own* attachment I felt not quite so certain; for, I had more experience in love. But no man doubts the depth or the durability of a passion *he* inspires; though all men are sceptical as to the extent or the sincerity of the attachments inspired by others of his own sex.

I presented myself at the usual dinner hour next day, and was introduced in due form to Sir Henry Moreton. He was a tall good-looking man, of about fifty; and I was not in his company five minutes before the creaking shoes and wig proved the accuracy of Caroline's description; though the latter was one of the most skilful imitations of what the newspaper puff advertisements style "the greatest ornament, a fine head of hair." I have remarked that people who wear creaking shoes or boots, are precisely those who are the most addicted to locomotion. Sir Henry walked up and down the room per-

petually; to lower the blind, to open a door, to close one, or to place a chair. In short, he was ever in a state of ceaseless restlessness, except when at table or at chess.

Caroline's beautiful eyes were red and swollen with weeping: and my passion for her was more than ever increased by this proof of her sensibility. When the ladies had withdrawn (and ardently did I long to accompany them), Sir Thomas announced to me, that the marriage of his daughter was to take place early in the ensuing week.

"We shall all proceed to Moreton Hall," continued he, "where we shall remain some time."

"And where," said Sir Henry, "I shall be glad to have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Lyster, whenever he can make it convenient to pay us a visit."

They talked over their plans, scarcely making any reference to the future Lady Moreton, who

was included in the *we* (how I detested the word!) with all the *sang froid* imaginable. Sir Henry Moreton was a formal, dull sort of man, answering precisely to the term, prig. He seemed perfectly satisfied with himself on all points, and next to himself, evidently estimated Sir Thomas Villiers, whom he treated with that profound respect, which middle aged people affect towards those who are their seniors; a line of conduct which they imagine, gives them an air of juvenility. His conversation was a tissue of truisms and common-place remarks, delivered with an air and an emphasis, clearly indicating that he himself considered them well worthy of attention.

"And this," thought I, "is the companion with whom the lovely Caroline is to pass her life! Why, his looks alone are sufficient to dullify the liveliest mind; and his conversation to set asleep the most wakeful, such are its soporific qualities."

When we joined the ladies, the two baronets immediately sat down to chess, a proceeding which seemed a great relief to Caroline.

"Now, Mr. Lyster, if you wish to see a game scientifically contested," said Sir Thomas, "you have a good opportunity; for, notwithstanding what a certain person, who shall be nameless, has been pleased to assert, relative to Sir Henry Moreton's being a mediocre player, I think you will admit that, on the contrary, he is a first-rate one."

"I should be glad to know," replied Sir Henry, his dark cheek reddening, "who the individual is, who has so far betrayed his own ignorance of the game, as to pronounce so erroneous an opinion?"

"That must be a secret," said Sir Thomas; "but the person, as you justly state, only betrayed his own want of knowledge of the game."

"One who can for hours contest a game with Sir Thomas Villiers, can be no mediocre player,

let me tell the person, whoever he may be," resumed Sir Henry.

"That's precisely what I said, Sir Henry. You remember, Mr. Lyster, these were nearly my words: and surely Sir Harry, who has now been a chess player these thirty years, must understand the game."

"I beg your pardon, Sir Thomas," replied the offended baronet, "you are under a mistake as to the number of years; for, at the period to which you refer, I was but a child, and consequently could not have been a chess player."

Caroline could not resist a smile, in which I joined, at this defence of his youth; but Sir Thomas, totally unmindful of the juvenile pretensions of his son-in-law elect, and only anxious to defend what he had once advanced, quaintly repeated—

"Child, indeed! why, surely, Sir Harry, a *man* is no *child* at twenty? and as you are now fifty, there was nothing *very* wrong on my part, in stating that you had been thirty years a chess

player. I have had ten years the start of you, which accounts for my superiority; but, I will lay a wager that you will beat any player of your own age in England, though you cannot beat me."

Never was there a man more vexed at this plain statement of his age, and in presence, too, of his future wife, who numbered barely eighteen summers, than Sir Henry. He grew red in the face, and made some false moves in the game, while his bride elect could not repress the smiles that played round her beautiful mouth.

"Sing us something, Cary, my love," said Sir Thomas, "I never can play well unless I hear your voice. And you, Miss Percy, while Cary is singing, had you not better come and look over our game? It will be a good lesson, and enable you to fill Sir Henry's place, in case of absence or illness, better than you have lately done.—Cary, sing me 'Old Robin Grey;' that's my favourite song. Don't you like 'Robin Grey,' Sir Henry?"

"I must always like whatever Miss Villiers may sing," replied Sir Henry; "but I confess 'Robin Grey' is not a particular favourite of mine."

"And why not, pray?" asked the obtuse Sir Thomas. "I should like to know what fault you can find with either the music or words? the first is melody itself, and the second contains a whole code of morals; yes, Sir Henry, and of the best morals. Why, what can be more dutiful, than a youthful creature who marries a rich old man to please her parents; and conquers her love for a young man, because she remembers the old husband was good and kind to her. Now I like a moral in a song as well as in a story, and I maintain that this song has one."

Even the quiet and silent Miss Percy seemed to feel the awkward parallel that might be drawn between the old husband of the song and the present candidate for the matrimonial state. Caroline sighed, and I echoed the sigh; while

Sir Henry looked redder than ever, and played, as Sir Thomas observed aloud, unusually ill.

"Come, Cary, give us the song," said her father, a command quickly obeyed, and never was song more admirably sung; though her voice occasionally trembled, and its plaintive tones drew an expression of pensive sympathy to the usually placid countenance of Miss Percy.

I sought, but sought in vain, an opportunity during the evening, of revealing my passion to the fair object of it. She continued seated at the pianoforte, which was so near the chess table, that I durst not hazard a word; and I left the room more in love than ever, and with less hope of the successful issue of my attachment. The next day, and the next, found Caroline with Sir Henry Moreton always at her side, or hovering so near her, that all private conversation with her was impossible. I therefore determined to pour out my whole soul in a letter to her, which I indited with all a

lover's eloquence, and, as I *now* think, but did not *then*, exaggeration. Yet, how have it delivered to her? whom could I trust? Sir Thomas was one of those old-fashioned masters of a family, now nearly extinct, and even at the remote period of which I write, beginning to be very scarce, who ruled his house, his child, his servants, and all that were his, with a despotic hand; allowing them little freedom of thought, at least little freedom in the expression of it, and still less freedom of action, and even refusing his daughter the permission to peruse a letter until it had been previously passed through the ordeal of his inspection.

All this rigid discipline I had casually discovered during my short acquaintance with the family; so how was I to evade this mental *cordon sanataire*, established by the old baronet? I had recourse to Miss Percy; her placidity and gentleness led me to hope that she would befriend an unhappy lover, and in a confidential note to her, explaining my passion for her friend, I

entreated her to deliver the letter that contained an avowal on which my happiness depended.

Miss Percy kept me not long in suspense; for, in half an hour from the period of its being despatched, the letter addressed to her friend was returned to me in an envelope, containing a note, stating that she "regretted I should have formed so erroneous an opinion of her character and principles, as to suppose that she would be the medium of a clandestine correspondence with the daughter of her benefactor, and the affianced wife of his friend."

I had scarcely finished the perusal of her billet, when Sir Thomas Villiers entered my room. I concluded that Miss Percy had betrayed me to him, and that he came to accuse me. His first sentence confirmed my suspicion.

"So, so! you are a pretty fellow," said he.

"Ay, it is all known," thought I; "but I must put the best face on it;" and accordingly drew up with what I meant should be a dignified attitude.

"I say you are a pretty fellow," repeated Sir Thomas, "here," pointing to a large envelope on the table, "is the pacquet unopened, containing the London papers, which I received this morning, and which I scarcely gave myself time to glance over, before I sent them to you, with a note, stating that I had not quite perused them, and requesting you to return them as soon as possible. Ay, here they are, note and all, unopened. Why, what the devil can you be at? what have you been thinking of?"

I made some blundering excuse, much relieved by finding my secret was still one to him; and he told me he wanted my assistance in a little matter. "I have had my daughter's portrait painted here," continued he, "by a very clever artist, who came to drink the waters. I intend it as a gift to her future husband, an agreeable surprise for the anniversary of his birth day, which takes place next month. I wish it to be set in a snuff-box, and not being learned or skilled in the taste of those sort of gim-cracks,

I want you to select the pattern for me, and superintend the execution. Will you undertake the commission, and don't mention a word about it to any one here?"

So saying, he handed me the portrait, which was so admirable a likeness of the fair original, that the sight of it occasioned me an emotion, I found it difficult to conceal.

"Well, you'll have it done, won't you? there's a good fellow," continued he; "so now good bye, I must be off, for I have a thousand things to settle. *Apropos* of settling, we have arranged that Caroline is to be married the day after to-morrow, three days sooner than we intended; but, Sir Henry has got a letter from home, saying that a county meeting is to take place, at which he wishes to be present, and so we advance the ceremony, that we may all set off together to Moreton Hall."

I know not *how* I *looked*, but I know how I *felt*, at this intelligence; and I wonder that he observed not my agitation. He did *not* remark

it however, for he left the room, repeating his "good bye, my dear fellow, I must be gone, I have a thousand things to do, so good bye, good bye."

I eagerly seized the portrait, pressed it to my lips again and again, and internally vowed that never should it leave my possession.

"What," thought I, "shall the unfeeling clod for whom it was destined, he who expedites his marriage with the loveliest and most fascinating of her sex, merely that he may attend a county meeting, shall he become the possessor of this treasure? No! forbid it love! happy, happy man, the beautiful original will be his! oh! how unworthy is he of such a creature; but this portrait *never* shall be his! I will have a copy made of it; a dull father, and duller husband's eyes will not detect the cheat; and this, this shall be mine, when she is lost to me for ever!"

I tore myself from Cheltenham next day; I dared not trust myself to see Caroline again, nor

remain in the place when she was to approach the altar, to vow to another, that affection which I still believed to be all my own. I fled, therefore from my abode like a madman, passed through London, where I only remained long enough to have a copy of the beautiful miniature made, and confided to a jeweller for setting. But ere I departed from the metropolis, I read in the papers, a pompous account of the marriage of Miss Villiers, "only daughter and sole heiress of Sir Thomas Villiers, Bart., of Conway Castle, in Wales, to Sir Henry Moreton, Bart., of Moreton Hall, in Gloucestershire, and Willisden Park, in Berks. The papers added, in the usual newspaper phraseology, "That the *happy* couple set out immediately after the ceremony, for Moreton Hall, where they were to spend the honeymoon."

The conclusion of the paragraph maddened me. "*Happy* couple," I repeated, in a rage, throwing the paper from me, as I figured to

myself the weeping, shrinking bride, wishing that the handsome, gentlemanly-looking man had been the substitute of *him* of the creaking boots and wig!

Never have I since read a similar newspaper announcement, and they occur nearly every day, without a bitter smile and doubt as to the reality of the happiness of the "*happy* couple;" and, could all the motives and feelings that influence the greater number of these individuals be analyzed, how few would be considered entitled to the appellation!" But this dark conviction, by the young and sanguine,—and when was youth otherwise than sanguine?—will, I know, be regarded as the jaundiced picture of an old bachelor. Well, be it so; yet a day will arrive, when the young will become old, and see objects through a less brilliant glass than they now employ; and *then*, they will not consider the old bachelor's opinion to be so very cynical.

I pass over a lapse of ten years, employed in travelling through Italy, Germany, Russia, and Sweden. Time, the best friend the unhappy know, though the one they most frequently accuse, had done for me that which he does for all, had healed the wounds of disappointed love; though a fond recollection of the beautiful Caroline still lived in the heart where she had reigned. I thought of her often; fondly loved to gaze upon her portrait, and still figured her, to "my mind's eye," as fair, blooming, and sylph-like, as when I had left her ten years before. I never thought of her as a wife, or a mother; the idea would have been too painful; and we all have a wonderful facility in banishing disagreeable ideas. No, Caroline, the *spirituelle*, playful Caroline, could not be the mother of boys and girls, to *him* of the squeaking boots and wig. There was something monstrous and disgusting in the notion; and so, I never permitted myself to entertain it.

Taking up an old English newspaper, one day, at an inn in Russia, I looked over the list of births, marriages, and deaths. The name of Sir Henry Moreton caught my eye; and while my heart beat quickly, and my hand trembled, I read a detailed statement of the death of the chess-loving baronet. I looked anxiously at the date, and found the paper was above a year old. And so, Caroline, the lovely Caroline (*my* Caroline she might *now* be), was free! There was joy, there was intoxication, in the thought; and in a few hours, I was in my travelling carriage, on my route to England.

I paused not, rested not, even for a day, until I reached London. Some one else might forestall my happiness. Beauty and talents like hers, could not fail to command admirers; and I trembled lest I should be too late in the proposal I intended to make her.

I ascertained that she was in town, and immediately called at her house, a stately mansion

in Hanover Square. On being shown to the library, I found my old acquaintance, Miss Percy, wearing the same demure aspect, but not placid countenance, that I remembered at Cheltenham. Alas! time had dealt rudely with her complexion, and taken away all the roundness of her figure, which now presented angles little in harmony with feminine grace. Encircling her eyes were certain marks, known by the vulgar appellation of crow's feet; and, descending from her nostrils to her thin lips, were two muscles in such *alto relievo*, as to display the anatomy of the movements of her mouth. I was startled at beholding this change.

"What!" thought I, "if Caroline should be as wofully altered as is her friend: if she, who was disposed to be rather too sylph-like, should, from the unhappiness of an ill-assorted union, have faded to a shadow, like the creature before me! But no; I will not allow myself to think such a cruel metamorphosis possible. She can-

not have lost her beauty, and must be still the lovely, the fascinating Caroline."

All this passed in my mind while Miss Percy was relating to me, that not only Sir Henry Moreton, but Sir Thomas Villiers, had "sought that bourne whence no traveller returns," having preceded his friend and son-in-law by a year. Miss Percy, put on what the French call a *figure d'occasion*, a most lugubrious countenance, while announcing these sad events.

"Lady Moreton has suffered severely," continued she; "for never was there a happier wife."

I could have beaten her for saying so, though I wholly doubted the fact; for, how could such a girl as Caroline be happy with the elderly gentleman with creaking boots and a wig?

"Her ladyship is only now beginning to receive her friends," added Miss Percy, "and is at this moment engaged with her lawyer; but she will be here in a short time."

Almost while she uttered these words, a *large* good-looking woman entered the room, with a high colour, and cheeks whose plumpness encroaching considerably on the precincts of her eyes, caused them to appear much smaller than suited the proportion accorded to the lines of beauty. Her figure harmonized perfectly with her face; and was one of those to whom the epithet "a *stout lady*," is always applied. She approached me, while I stood in silent wonder, and in accents never forgotten, exclaimed, "Ah! I see, Mr. Lyster, you do not recognise me."

Ye gods! it was Caroline that now stood before me, the once beautiful Caroline! But never had such a transformation taken place in mortal. I was almost petrified by the sight, and could scarcely command sufficient presence of mind to go through the common forms of politeness, by maintaining a conversation.

"Come, Mr. Lyster," said Lady Moreton, (again to call the *stout lady* before me, 'Caroline,'

would be mockery), "come with me, that I may show you what you, I am sure, as an old friend, will have pleasure in seeing."

"What can she mean?" thought I, as I followed her through the ante room; "but, after seeing *herself*, nothing can shock or surprise me."

She opened the door of a large room, in the middle of which stood two rocking horses, mounted by a boy and girl, two chubby, rosy-faced children, bearing a strong resemblance to her ladyship; *not* as she formerly looked, but as she at present appeared. Two other, and younger children were toddling about the room with their nurses, making no little noise; and at a table in the recess of the window, sat the two elder scions of the family stock, engaged at chess.

"There, Mr. Lyster, are my two eldest sons," said Lady Moreton. "This is Sir Henry Moreton, and the other is Sir Thomas Villiers, to whom my poor father's baronetcy devolved. Are

they not strikingly like their father and grandfather, Mr. Lyster?"

Never were seen two more extraordinary resemblances! and the gravity of their countenances, and the strict attention they paid their game, completed all the features of this wonderful similarity.

"They will play for whole hours together," continued Lady Moreton, pensively; "and are never so happy as when thus employed. Nothing affords me a greater gratification than to watch them at such moments, Mr. Lyster; for their occupation brings back to me the memory of those dear, and lost to me for ever——" and she wiped a tear, yes, positively, a real tear, from her eye.

"Come, Henry, my dear, come and speak to this gentleman," resumed his mother, with a tremulous voice.

The boy approached me with measured steps, and a formal air; and his shoes creaked so

exactly as those of his father used to do, that for a moment I looked at his hair, expecting to see that he also wore a wig, so precisely did he appear a miniature copy of the defunct Baronet.

"It is strange," said Lady Moreton, "to what a degree he has all the little personal peculiarities of his poor dear father. I do not know, Mr. Lyster, whether you ever observed that my dear Sir Henry's shoes always creaked? At first, I had a distaste to the sound; for I was, as you may remember, a giddy, and perhaps an over fastidious girl, about trifles. But one soon learns to approve all the peculiarities of the father of one's children; and I now have a pleasure, though it is not devoid of melancholy, in hearing my boy's shoes creak like those of his father."

The good natured mother was so perfectly in earnest, that, hang me, if I could smile at the bathos of this sentimentality; though, I confess, I lamented that the young Sir Henry did not

wear a wig, which would have perfected the almost irresistibly ludicrous resemblance.

The mother kissed each and all of her progeny, with true maternal tenderness; and I left her, perfectly cured of my old flame, and smiling at the illusion I had for ten years nourished, at the cost of sundry sighs and regrets.

In ten days after my first visit, I called again at Hanover Square, in order that I might not appear uncivil to Lady Moreton; for, I confess, all desire of beholding her, had quite subsided; nay, the sight of her was disagreeable to me. Again, I found Miss Percy alone, who, with her demure face looking still more demure, and her formal manner still more formal, "hoped I had forgiven her for returning my letter at Cheltenham; but, her principles would not permit her to be the medium of a clandestine correspondence."

"Oh, I quite forgive you, Miss Percy," said I, "though at the time it caused me much un-

happiness, for I—(you will pardon me for saying it, as, after so great a lapse of time, it may be said without impropriety) I rather thought I was not disagreeable to Miss Villiers."

"You certainly were *not* disagreeable to her," replied Miss Percy, "for I have frequently heard her say she thought you very good natured."

"But, did she never say more than this, Miss Percy?" I retorted, quickly, driven off my guard; "did she not once avow, ay, and to *you*, Miss Percy, when you were urging her to gratify her father by marrying Sir Henry, and she was objecting to his age, creaking shoes, and wig—did she not then, I ask, confess that she wished *I* was the substitute for Sir Henry?"

"Never, by my sacred word of honor!" rejoined Miss Percy.

"She might not have precisely named me, but she most clearly and distinctly meant me," I insisted.

"I do remember, Mr. Lyster, her objecting

to the age, the creaking shoes, and wig, yet never, never, making any allusion to you. But how *you* can have imagined this misconception, and, more strange still, how you can have known our private conversation, astonishes me."

"Who, then, was meant by the 'gentlemanly looking man' (I was ashamed to say handsome) you met on the stairs, who took off his hat, and whose hair called forth some flattering remark from your friend? *I*, Miss Percy, met Miss Villiers and you on the stairs that day; *I* took off my hat, and therefore it was not preposterous to believe that *I* was the person meant."

"Oh! *now* you remind me of the circumstances (though how *you* came to know them is a mystery to me), I *do* remember her alluding to a gentleman we met on the stairs, the same day we met you; *he* was peculiarly good looking, and Miss Villiers often reverted to his appearance. *We* met this same gentleman in London the subsequent season, in society. Lady More-

ton recognised him; and I well recollect her saying to me, 'Eliza, marriage makes a strange difference in people's feelings. Do you remember my wishing that gentleman had been the person chosen for my husband instead of Sir Henry; ay, and my admiration of his hair? *Now*, Eliza, I would not change *my* husband for the handsomest man that nature ever formed; and the *wig* of the father of my boy is more attractive to me than the finest head of hair in the world.' The gentleman was Lord Tyrconnell, Mr. Lyster; I may tell you so now, as he is dead."

Well did I recollect seeing Lord Tyrconnell pass through Cheltenham the very day to which she alluded. He was the handsomest man of his time, and his hair was remarkable for its luxuriance and beauty; yet, I never suspected that the praises that sounded so sweet to my ears, from the lips of the fair Caroline, could apply to other than myself. Thus ended an-

other illusion; the destruction of which cost me perhaps as much mortification, as the change which, in defacing Lady Moreton's charms, had terminated my attachment to her.

And now, gentle and courteous reader, having, by the recital of my youthful flames, beguiled some hours that might have been tedious to me, and, peradventure, transferred the infliction to you, I cannot close without offering my thanks for the patience that has conducted you to my last love. Vale, then, and take with you the good wishes of

AN ELDERLY GENTLEMAN.

THE END.

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